

**Exploring Leadership in Low-authority Environments**  
**by**  
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of the degree of  
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at

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## ***Abstract***

This thesis contributes to the literature on distributed leadership by exploring leadership experiences in low-authority environments such as those found in professional organizations, where high levels of individual autonomy are combined with a highly educated workforce. A subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology underpin empirical research consisting of 86 interviews with senior academics (28), senior clinicians (35) and politicians (23). By examining the assumptions of distributed leadership, alongside the attitudes and perceptions of leadership within low-authority environments, this thesis argues that it is problematic to take a singular, typically heroic view of leadership and distribute it such that co-leadership occurs. Findings suggest that there are often multiple, overlapping and potentially conflicting organizational memberships and allegiances which subsist within the whole, and that a lack of reciprocity leads to significant issues when attempting to distribute leadership within low-authority settings. The thesis therefore makes a theoretical contribution to distributed leadership whereby it extends current thinking by suggesting that, in low-authority environments, there are often multiple organizational memberships at play which compete for the attention of the professional.

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## ACADEMIC REGISTRY

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# 1 Introduction

This thesis examines leadership in professional environments where high levels of individual autonomy are bestowed upon the workforce and where teams are commonly led by peers. Leadership, management and organizational structures have been researched and contextualized in a variety of disciplines and sectors for many years, with the basis of these concepts being traced back thousands of years to their crudest forms. Vast amounts of literature on leadership and management revolve around the assumption that people do as they are told without confrontation, with threats of sanctions being one key driver. Historically, in large, militaristic and religious organizations, this may have been an accurate account of what happened. Soldiers, for example, joined the army and were commanded by senior officers to carry out orders and missions, which they did without dispute. However, in modern practice, this is no longer the case, perhaps even in military settings. Alternative organizational structures mean that for leadership or management to take place, this sometimes relies upon its dispersal amongst members of a team. However, one of the existing gaps is the contextualisation of a leader's ability, or lack thereof, to control and coordinate subordinates with whom they essentially share the same position within an organization. Organizational structures change according to the environment in which they operate, with particular sectors adopting a more collegiate, dispersed approach to leadership and management.

Change is typically conceptualized as a dynamic process, bringing about elements of uncertainty, ambiguity and degrees of discomfort amongst those experiencing it. These can be attributed to individuals or the organization as a whole. Change can sometimes be uncontrollable, as well as a necessary evil, and is made more challenging when considered with uncontrollable external factors. Coupled with this, human capital is one of the most likely hindrances an organization will come up against in contemplating a change initiative. Factors including length of tenure, together with individual and group motivations to change can be barriers to altering practices, with reluctance further stemming from reasoning behind change being implemented. If dealt with properly, there is little or no reason why change cannot be implemented effectively. This can be of benefit to the growth and development of an organization and those working in it.

However, despite these supposed impediments, change is necessary and something without which organizations would stagnate and failure to embrace new and emerging practices would lead to their eventual demise. In some environments, change can be more



easily initiated as it is engrained in its organization's ethos and culture, and staff members are more receptive to its presence and implementation. If this is the case, with employees readily able to accept and embrace change, the organization stands a much better chance of an initiative being successful. Yet, some environments still struggle to cope well with change, with the potential for the demise of an organization. Despite human capital being the most valuable asset of an organization, it can be the most prohibitive when driving change.

This situation is further exacerbated in particular environments where change initiators, i.e., leaders, only hold alleged positions of power and authority for a finite period of time, after which they demit and return to their original role. As change is contentious and often difficult to instigate, this leads to questioning whether leadership or management are even possible within such dynamic, changing environments, when leaders only have a limited tenure in which to direct an initiative. The word *alleged* is used as there is ambiguity surrounding whether people holding such positions actually have influence over subordinates. Further, in more recent styles of organization, individuals are granted increasing degrees of autonomy which can lead to them perceiving they are their own boss with their own agenda, ignoring colleagues and the wider organization. This raises the question whether these individuals with greater degrees of individual autonomy fundamentally subscribe to being part of the same organization as their leaders and, if this is not true, how they can be led at all.

There has been considerable research into leadership and management, as well as associated characteristics, motivations and how human resources are coordinated. However, the application of these in low-authority settings appears to be fairly scant. These environments harness little sanction for non-conformists, offer few incentives to drive lacklustre employees and are often inhabited by highly skilled, professionally motivated individuals. This creates an opportunity to inform practitioners on how best to cope with employees who may not be trained in leadership or management but are fulfilling roles involving delicate coordination of resources and people. This research aims to address issues surrounding the coordination of staff in these highly skilled, autonomous environments within which, a lot of the time, leaders are controlling peers alongside leadership predecessors and successors. Previous research has wrongly assumed that one organizational membership pervades, without consideration given to a pluralistic, rather than individualistic view of organization. For example, one is not only a PhD student, but also part of the wider university, as well as being part of a family unit,

thus reinforcing multiple organizational affiliations. However, as this research demonstrates, multiple organizational relationships transpire as a common cause of difficulty in leadership or management in low-authority settings.

### ***1.1 Leadership and Management***

Taylor (1856-1915), despite being a mechanical engineer, strived to improve industrial efficiency and subsequently became a pioneer and influential in management research (Wren, 1979), but not without criticism (Gilbreth, 1914; Locke, 1982). However, his work marked the beginning of further research into what he termed as individualized working, promoting the idea that “group work and rewards undermined individual productivity” (Locke, 1982, p.11). Further, his early work on the subject highlighted that “personal ambition always has been and will remain a more powerful incentive to exertion than a desire for the general welfare” (Taylor, 1912, p.17), with benefits including greater individual independence and flexibility.

Historically, Fayol (1916) described the overarching functions of management as planning, organizing, staffing and controlling, all which remain as recognizable management processes today. Further, his research was very reliant upon hierarchy, which is in contention with the dispersal of leadership through an organization. Despite this, leadership and management share commonalities and are similar in many ways (Northouse, 2016), as Simonet and Tett’s (2012) study showed. In their exploration, they sought to identify overlapping competencies between leadership and management and in consultation with 43 experts almost 30% of those competencies were identified as coinciding with both concepts. Equally, there were found to be isolating attributes for each, including rule orientation, safety concerns and timeliness in management and motivation, creativity and tolerance of ambiguity in leadership.

Yet, discontent has been expressed at such comparisons between leadership and management (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1990; Rost, 1993). Bennis and Nanus (1985) conclude that management achieves activities and routine, whilst leadership is about influencing others and instigating a change process. An oft-cited quotation plainly summarizes their reported distinctions: “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p.221). Further contention is offered in Kotter’s (1990) comparison of leadership and management,

where he argues that the two concepts are rather dissimilar. These intricacies are illustrated in Table 1.1.

<b>Leadership</b> <i>Produces change and movement</i>	<b>Management</b> <i>Produces order and consistency</i>
<u>Establishing Direction</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a vision</li> <li>• Clarify big picture</li> <li>• Set strategies</li> </ul>	<u>Planning and Budgeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish agendas</li> <li>• Set timetables</li> <li>• Allocate resources</li> </ul>
<u>Aligning People</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate goals</li> <li>• Seek commitment</li> <li>• Build teams and coalitions</li> </ul>	<u>Organizing and Staffing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide structure</li> <li>• Make job placements</li> <li>• Establish rules and procedures</li> </ul>
<u>Motivating and Inspiring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire and energize</li> <li>• Empower followers</li> <li>• Satisfy unmet needs</li> </ul>	<u>Controlling and Problem Solving</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop incentives</li> <li>• Generate creative solutions</li> <li>• Take corrective action</li> </ul>

**Table 1.1 Functions of Leadership and Management (adapted from Kotter, 1990)**

Kotter (1990) continues his comparison, advocating that both concepts are pivotal for organizational prosperity. From sound management and no leadership bureaucracy can ensue, yet good organizational leadership without associated management can lead to misdirection and prohibit change. In a similar light, Rost (1993) compares leadership and management in relationship terms, with management as a one-directional authoritative, job-completion-oriented relationship compared to leadership as multidirectional, mutual purpose and influential.

In deciding terms to use for this thesis, consideration should be granted to the individuals that inhabit such roles - leaders and managers - rather than relying solely on phenomena and conceptual undertones of the functions they fulfil. The values, nature and creative processes of leaders and managers are said to be completely opposing Zaleznik, 1992, with research benefiting from such extreme bipolarity (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1990; Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; Simonet & Tett, 2012). Writers have previously regarded leaders as unique and as having particularly outstanding attributes, whilst managers are often considered through a more ordinary, negative lens (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Yukl, 2002). In further regard to followers, their perceptions of managers are essential in a number of organizational aspects, including performance, job satisfaction and compliance, all of which are purported to be heightened when followers perceive their managers as leaders (Lord & Maher, 1991; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; De Luque et al., 2008).

Leadership and management have become essential aspects of our lives, but confusion between the two remains despite having what could be deemed as similar, sometimes overlapping characteristics. For consistency throughout this research project, the terms leader and leadership will be adopted, as there appears increased appreciation of teams and followers in organizational processes and the subsequent benefits they can have (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006), including instigating change. This does not, however, dismiss the notion of overlapping attributes and perceptions between leadership and management throughout, as is evidenced by several studies (Simonet & Tett, 2012; Northouse, 2016) and illustrated in Table 1.1. Provision cannot be made for respondents referring to their superiors as *line managers* or equivalent, and these terms will appear in this thesis. Accordingly, some aspects of the coding process have been influenced as a result. Also, there are appropriate references made to management in this work; however, where possible, the term leadership has been used throughout.

## ***1.2 Leadership in Low-authority Settings***

This section considers the low-authority settings within which this research is based. Having detailed the intricacies of adhocracies and low-authority environments, the chapter continues by outlining the historical progression of professions through to modern contextualization. Subsequent sections summarize why the settings were chosen.

Low-authority settings, specifically academia, healthcare and local government, were chosen for their highly skilled, professional makeups, together with increased levels of autonomy bestowed upon individuals. Academia and healthcare professionals require vast amounts of training to attain professional status, with ongoing development required to progress through an organization. However, the political environment is different, in that there are no formal entry requirements, despite local government politicians being elected perhaps because of prior experience in another sector (finance, legal, HR, etc.). Another perception is that politicians are the only group out of the three who are elected to their roles as a result of public and colleague popularity, meaning that they will not be elected to, or indeed maintain, a political leadership position if they are not favoured by their constituents and colleagues around them.

The following considers early conceptualizations, interpretations and attributes of organizational types which counter hierarchy in favour of a more fluid, less rigid reporting structure. The term *low-authority* is a hybrid term used to describe a setting in

which there are lower levels of formal power bestowed upon the nominal person in charge, with subordinates often acting independently and, sometimes, in contravention of direct instructions. These environments are commonplace in, but not confined to, institutions and organizations where there are increased levels of professional autonomy and skill level. Such organizations and authority levels are in contrast to high authority environments, often with militaristic roots, where command and control are engrained and inculcated, where they remain key and respected amongst organizational members.

### **1.2.1 Adhocracy**

In challenging conventional forms of organization, including labour and task defined, hierarchical, machine-like bureaucracy (Weber, 1958), adhocracy was coined by Bennis and Slater (1968, p.74) as:

“adaptive, problem-solving, temporary systems of diverse specialists, linked together by coordinating and task-evaluating executive specialists in an organic flux – this is the organization form that will gradually replace bureaucracy as we know it.”

It was further popularized by Toffler (1970), who proliferated the contention of bureaucracy, highlighting that within such organizational structures:

“each man is frozen into a narrow, unchanging niche in a rabbit-warren bureaucracy. The walls of this niche squeeze individuality out of him, smash his personality, and compel him, in effect, to conform or die” (p.124).

Toffler (1970) offers adhocracy as an incumbent form of a future-planning organizational structure in response to members having an unavoidable interaction with organization in their daily lives. In adopting such, “instead of being trapped in some unchanging, personality-smashing niche, man will find himself liberated, a stranger to a new free-form world of kinetic organizations,” continuing in highlighting that “his position will be constantly changing, fluid and varied” (p.125).

Adhocracy has been used in a number of settings to substantiate empirical studies (Woodward, 1965; Galbraith, 1973; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Chandler & Sayles, 1971); however, Mintzberg (1979a) adopts adhocracy as a key aspect of his research. In supporting this, Mintzberg (1979a, p.431) dismisses the ability of other forms of organizational structure, such as bureaucracy and divisionalization, in being fit to facilitate “sophisticated innovation” whilst defending and concurrently promoting the abilities of an adhocracy. Further, he purports that innovation occurring in anything but an adhocratic setting would be relatively simple in form. This does not mean dismissing

the ability of other organizational structures being able to cope with change. Mintzberg (1979a, p.431) is merely reinforcing that “innovation of the sophisticated variety” requires “sophisticated expertise,” often only apparent in adhocratic settings. Consequently, the types of individuals required to facilitate novel working practices and skill need to be professionals in their area of expertise.

To support this form of authority dispersal, the organization must readily give “power to experts - professionals whose knowledge and skills have been highly developed in training programs” (Mintzberg, 1979a, p.434). Linking back, Toffler (1970) proposes that despite the gender biased language which would nowadays be considered offensive and excluding, “men on top” (p.140) often find it difficult to understand the expertise of the specialists whom they employ. In response, Toffler (1970) suggests that “increasingly, managers have to rely on the judgement of these experts” (p.140), resulting in them “losing their monopoly on decision-making” (p.140). This forces leaders to disseminate more autonomy and decision-making powers to specialist colleagues as a result of their own lack of understanding. A later study by Goodman and Goodman (1976) reinforces this idea by expressing that role clarity brings tardiness in the innovation process and that “coordination can no longer be planned but must come through interaction” (p.494). Mintzberg (1979a) contextualizes adhocratic structure by relating it to a tent instead of a palace, explaining that instead of seeing properties as threats they should, instead, be seen as benefits and be exploited as such.

Accordingly, with disseminated innovation and problem solving in mind, adhocracy is alleged to be configured using these five elements illustrated in Table 1.2:

<i>Adhocratic Configurations</i> (adapted from Mintzberg & McHugh, 1985, p.160)	<b>Current Settings</b>		
	A	H	LG
Organization operates in a dynamic, complex environment, requiring sophisticated innovation, delivering unique output	✓	✓	✓
Delivery of unique outputs requires organizations to engage those highly trained and use talents in multidisciplinary teams	✓	✓	
Experts are divided into units for administrative and housekeeping purposes, but deployed as necessary into temporary project teams	✓	✓	✓
The complex, unpredictable nature of the work relies on mutual adjustment for coordination, encouraged by quasi structured parameters	✓	✓	✓
Organization is selectively decentralized; decision power is diffused unevenly, subject to information availability and expert requirements	✓	✓	

**Table 1.2 Adhocratic Configurations**

In Table 1.2, the gaps appearing for local government can be explained by those inhabiting such environments not having to be expertly trained like their academic and clinical counterparts. Despite, perhaps, being part of multidisciplinary teams or committees, there is no absolute requirement of being in local government to have minimum qualifications. Further, decision-making powers in local government are fairly well structured in that specific committees discuss particular topics before passing these to deciding committees for final approval. Once again, expert requirements are not a pre-condition to practice in local government, whereas in academia and clinical environments, specialists will have been trained to a minimum standard.

In a more focused manner, Mintzberg et al., (1999, p.708) state that in order “to innovate, we must break away from established patterns,” highlighting that organizations and individuals must be receptive to change in order for innovation to occur. As previous research exposes, adhocracy can manifest in a variety of different situations, for example, under changing market conditions and with ambitious personnel (Deutschmann, 1995; Mintzberg, 1979a). Adhocracy depends on organizational structures which were originally designed around product or function (Oliveira & Takahashi, 2012; Lunenburg, 2012). However, adhocratic organizations rely on specializations and situational management of a project or operation and, as the name suggests, focus on “ad-hoc tasks” (Deutschmann, 1995). Each project-related task is brought together with other constituent components to achieve the overall goal and dismantled at the close of the project. This is opposed to a bureaucratic form of organization, which is very processional and relies heavily on standardized regulatory functions (Dolan, 2010). From a holistic, strategic perspective, the readiness and ability to alter practices so quickly is of benefit to an organization, as they can tailor their ways of working depending on many different components: for example, labour, market conditions, political influences. The adoption of an adhocratic organizational structure allows for dynamic environments and situations to be dealt with appropriately by a number of departments, termed cross-functional coordination, within a firm (Bailey & Neilsen, 1992). An example of the sheer complexity of adhocracies and their fluid, unpredictable nature is highlighted in an American organization’s experience in the 1960s, during which they altered their structure almost twenty times in eight years (Litzinger et al., 1970) until it reached an acceptable state. This ability to change until consensus is reached mandates innovation. There are boundaries to innovative practice, in that no one person can simply “monopolise the power to innovate,” with mutual adjustment, put simply as collaborative,

multidisciplinary working, being employed in an adhocratic organizational setting (Mintzberg, 1979a, p.462).

It must, however, be made clear that adhocracy will not work all the time and is unlikely to be adopted in isolation or ignorance of other structures. Its flexibility and situational applicability allow for fluid adoption and amalgamation with other forms of organizational structure, which has led to the emergence of a hybrid “bureau-adhocracy” structure (Mintzberg, 1979a, p.367). This allows an organization to deal with even more changeable environments and situations across functions within the firm. Table 1.3 highlights the key activities within an organization and what characteristics they would have within different structures.

	Organizational Structure		
	<i>Bureaucracy</i>	<i>Meritocracy</i>	<i>Adhocracy</i>
Model appropriate conditions	Relatively stable	High technological progress	High unpredictability
Activity coordination	Rules and procedures	Mutual adjustment and free idea flow	Problem and opportunity dependent
Decision-making	Through hierarchy	Argument and discussion	Trial and error
Personnel motivation	Extrinsic rewards (pay)	Personal mastery, interesting work	Stretch goals with eventual recognition

**Table 1.3 Organizational Models (adapted from Birkinshaw & Ridderstrale, 2015)**

Together with this type of structure, it is important to consider the characteristics and mechanisms utilized in an organization to gain cooperation from co-workers. In low-authority environments, these attributes may differ from the coercive and militaristic tactics used in contrasting high authority environments. These may be seen as traditional and effective forms of persuasion, albeit only acceptable in certain environments. The rest of this chapter details professions and progresses onto a contextual review of the settings chosen for this thesis.

### **1.2.2 The Professions**

The word *profession* originates from a declaration taken by those committing to a religious order, stemming from the Greek *prophaino*, meaning “to declare publicly,” with the Latin *professio* also being derived. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a profession as “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a



formal qualification.” Kipling (1899, p.15) wrote about “the world’s oldest profession” in his short story, *On the City Wall*, about an Indian prostitute. There is debate surrounding what is the world’s oldest profession (Kipling, 1899), with authors in support of it being prostitution (Lerner, 1986). Traditionally, the “three learned professions” are considered to be divinity (clergymen), law (attorneys) and medicine (physicians and surgeons) (Fisher, 1846, p.234).

According to Burrage (1990), post-World War II research into professions focused on the creation and affairs of corporate institutions, elite membership of organizations and the issues that came to the attention of governing bodies. This left a gap in research into the working practices of other organizational members and subordinates. Further, there was criticism of how the professions operated in favour of glorifying the leaders who coped during challenging times. These accounts were often bias-laden as a result of being commissioned by the professions themselves, or being published by senior members (see Clark, 1964, 1966; Cope, 1959).

Early studies of professions (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Durkheim, 1957; Parsons, 1954) saw them as playing a functional societal role, helping in the “resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution” (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933, p.497). From then, further studies aimed at developing a set of characteristics that differentiated professions from other careers (Etzioni, 1969; Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hickson & Thomas, 1969).

The professions, and professionals within, differ from business or trades people, in that they belong to an ethically and code reliant discipline whose commitments are rooted in the expected behaviour of their members (Tsou et al., 2013). This can be traced back to Wilensky (1964), who proposed two distinctions between occupations and professions, including technical expertise and social conscience. Greenwood (1957) previously uncovered that social conscience is verified through professional status and recognition by those outwith such a community, bound by an ethical code of practice. Table 1.4 details jobs classified as a profession over time and key attributes associated with them.

Professions of History (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accountants</li><li>• Actuaries</li><li>• Architects</li><li>• Artists</li><li>• Authors</li><li>• Brokers</li><li>• Chemists</li><li>• Dentists</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doctors</li><li>• Engineers</li><li>• Journalists</li><li>• Lawyers</li><li>• Masseurs</li><li>• Merchant Navy</li><li>• Mid-wives</li><li>• Mine Managers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nurses</li><li>• Opticians</li><li>• Patent Agents</li><li>• Pharmacists</li><li>• Physicists</li><li>• Public Administrators</li><li>• Surveyors</li><li>• Teachers</li></ul>	
Attributes of a Profession (Goode, 1960, p.903)			
<div>1. The profession determines its own standards of education and training</div> <div>2. The student professional goes through a more far-reaching adult socialization experience than the learner in other occupations</div> <div>3. Professional practice is often legally recognized by some form of licensure</div> <div>4. Licensing and admission boards are manned by members of the profession</div> <div>5. Most legislation concerned with the profession is shaped by that profession</div> <div>6. Occupation gains in income, power and prestige, and demands higher calibre students</div> <div>7. The practitioner is relatively free of lay evaluation and control</div> <div>8. Norms of practice enforced by the profession are more stringent than legal control</div> <div>9. Members are more strongly identified and affiliated with the profession than are members of other occupations with theirs</div> <div>10. The profession is more likely to be a terminal occupation</div>			
Attributes of a Profession (Goldstein, 1984, p.175)	Current Settings		
	A	H	LG
A body of esoteric knowledge, mastery of which is the indispensable qualification for practice of the profession	✓	✓	
Monopoly – that is, recognition of the exclusive competence of the profession in the domain to which its body of knowledge refers	✓	✓	
Autonomy, or control by the profession over its work, including who can legitimately do that work and how the work should be done	✓	✓	✓
A commitment or ethical imperative to place the welfare of the public or client above the self-interest of the practitioner, even though the practitioner is earning a living through exercising the profession	✓	✓	✓

**Table 1.4 Historical Development of Professions**

Once again, similar to Table 1.2, Table 1.4 highlights gaps with local government, in that there is no strict body of knowledge necessary to become a politician. Taking a momentary digression toward professionals inhabiting these environments, Mitchell (1965, p.34) describes social and personal morality alongside motives of these people:

“...a state of mind. Whenever outrunning the desire for personal profit, we find joy in work, eagerness in service, and a readiness in the cooperative process, then trade has been left behind and [a profession] has been entered.”

In keeping with social conscience, Marsten (1974, p.20) aligns professionalism with societal functions, with those displaying “the objective application of specialized knowledge to solving problems,” answering “an obligation to advancement of human welfare.” Goldstein (1984) continues that intellectuality and social process take place as a result of being part of a profession, whilst applying a particular body of knowledge to meet or alleviate social need.

Toward the contexts of this study, for which there is substantial training involved for entry and progression in two aspects, Brante (1990, p.79) proposes a definition of professions as being:

“non-manual full-time occupations which presuppose a long specialized and tendentiously also scholarly training which imparts specific, generalizable and theoretical professional knowledge, often proven by examination.”

In line with this, Fournier (1999, p.287) highlights that “being a professional is not merely about absorbing a body of scientific knowledge but is also about conducting and constituting oneself in an appropriate manner.” This highlights that individuals within are bound not only by the organization they are employed by to fulfil their trained role (academics, clinicians, politicians), but there is an expectation that they will act in accordance with the ethics and values within their professional communities.

Focussing on academia and medicine, Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011, p.99) highlight these environments as “pure professionalism” as they have “succeeded in isolating and optimizing their associational, educational and occupational structures,” as well as “established stable and protected groups of workers that could rely upon entrance barriers and regulatory mechanisms for standardizing and supervising worker behaviours.” The following section considers the research purpose for this study, before delving deeper into each of the contexts chosen with concluding remarks for the entire chapter.

### ***1.3 Research Purpose***

#### **1.3.1 Research Aim**

The principal aim of this research is to undertake an investigation into how leaders exercise influence in low-authority settings, and whether they can distribute leadership. This aim is addressed through the following question:

How is distributed leadership operationalized in low-authority settings?

### 1.3.2 Research Objectives

- i. To explore distributed leadership theory literature and identify theoretical gaps
- ii. To make a significant, empirically informed contribution to the practice of distributed leadership in low-authority settings
- iii. To explore the barriers to reconfiguring the distribution of leadership tasks in low-authority settings

In order to explore these research questions adequately, access was required to highly professional, autonomous environments. The next section will look at the settings within which the data collection process took place to expose the most enlightening results.

### 1.4 *Context: Low-authority Settings*

Within qualitative research, gaining access is pivotal to success. This project was advantageous in that it aimed at resonating and creating interest amongst participants. The settings were chosen partly because of their size and access capability. However, this does not preclude other potential low-authority environments from further investigation. Along with the familiarity of the three settings, consideration was given prior to data collection to ensure that an adequate and varied sample could be collected within the timeframe. The contexts were undertaken on the basis of having been largely developed within the extant distributed leadership literature. It seemed appropriate to strengthen the argument by augmenting these settings, with local government transpiring as an interesting hybrid and bridge between professional and low-authority environments, as well as contributing an environment that could be construed as one which isn't as heavily regulated for individuals to enter as that of academia and healthcare. Local government politicians are different from academics and clinicians, in that they are not purposely trained in the role they carry out. Academics are required to attain a minimum degree level, whilst doctors must complete medical and specialist training. This is not necessarily the case for politicians; however, this is not to say they are not trained from previous roles: for example, finance, legal, HR. As illustrated in Table 1.2 and Table 1.4, academia and healthcare very much mimic the characteristics associated with adhocratic and professional settings. However, local government transpires as an environment, whilst still operating as a low-authority, to be slightly nuanced from academia and healthcare, adding an interesting dynamic to the research.

Further exploration could provide evidence to support Fournier's (1999) statement, which highlights that professionals need to act in an accepted way to be part of the larger organization. For example, academics may be employed by a university, yet they are part

of the larger academic community stretching globally. A clinician is employed by a health board, yet is accountable to, and monitored by, the General Medical Council. This is the point where local government politicians inject an interesting nuance to the research, in that they are not hugely remunerated for their work, and do not have to undertake professional examinations to be elected. They need to appeal to their constituents and colleagues to be elected into leadership positions. By having this additional contrasting sector, this provides a constant with which to informally compare results but, essentially, the environments are all similar in their low-authority nature.

#### **1.4.1 Academia**

Academia comes from the Greek Ἀκαδημία *akademeia*; originally a grove of trees and gymnasium outside of Athens where Plato taught (Liddell & Scott, 1996). The challenges faced in academia have been widely considered (Goode & Bagihole, 1998; Jackson, 1999; Deem et al., 2001; Barry et al., 2001; Smith, 2002, 2005; Sotirakou, 2004; Smith & Adams, 2008; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Mercer, 2009; Winter, 2009) in education and management journals. This may be partially as a result of changes to funding streams, greater regulation governing institutions and an increasingly competitive market, considerations that, historically, were not pertinent (see Cohen & March, 1974; Keller, 1983; Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Prior to the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, UK Universities were instituted by Royal Charter (not exclusively universities), Papal Bull or seal (Botsford & Botsford, 1922) or an act of parliament. Since 1992, newer institutions have been given authority to award degrees. A university is governed predominantly by a Court or Council in Scotland and England respectively, and invariably managed by a Principal or Vice-Chancellor, with a Chancellor holding a ceremonial role. Exceptions to this include Oxford and Cambridge Universities, where the university court enforces principles based on canon and civil law, with limitations now dictated by common law (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911). With Court or Council having overriding responsibility for financial and contractual undertakings, academic decisions are often made by Academic Senate, with ratification being from Court or Council.

As with any organizational structure, subordinates upwardly report, and in the majority of academic administration, leaders are working with peers in the running of a department or subject function. This is often a similar case with clinicians who, upon reaching consultant grade, are actively encouraged to take on an additional administrative role on

top of their clinical work. Yet, despite this supposed formal structure, the increased levels of autonomy in academia make it one of a number of ideal settings in which to conduct this research.

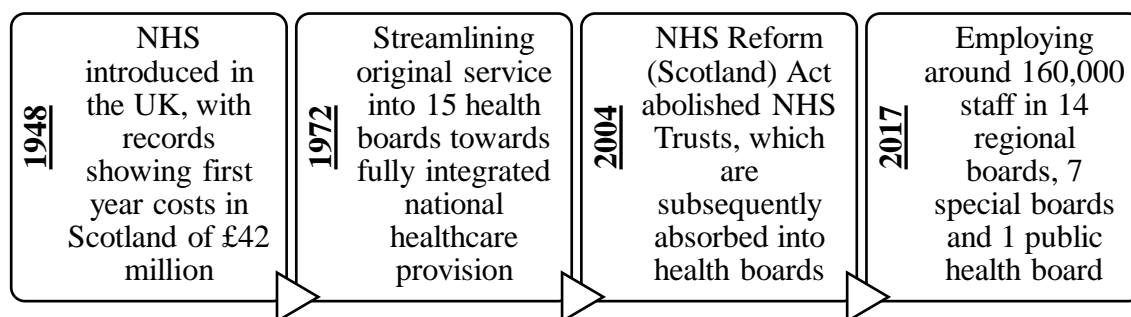
A Head of Department is typically the first formal level of academic leadership within a university. This is then followed by a Head of School or Faculty, who will usually be in charge of a number of disciplines, notwithstanding deputy and associate positions providing support. Pro-vice Chancellor positions are most commonly next in the university leadership hierarchy, once again, with each individual responsible for a particular set of disciplines or a key organizational portfolio. A Deputy Principal is typically second in line to the Principal and Vice Chancellor, who is the overall leader of the university's core decision-making group. The executive leadership team, made up of the most senior academics, reports directly to the Court or Council of the university, who ratify all decisions. Along with the Court of a University, the Senate is the supreme academic body, with ultimate responsibility for student admissions, curriculum, teaching and research standards, along with degree and qualification award.

#### **1.4.2 Healthcare**

The Hippocratic Oath (circa 500 BCE) is said to be the oldest oath, to which newcomers subscribe and swear to (Lammers, 1998):

- Utilize their skills to help the ill and to avoid patient harm or injustice
- Maintain patient confidentiality
- Avoid inappropriate sexual relationships

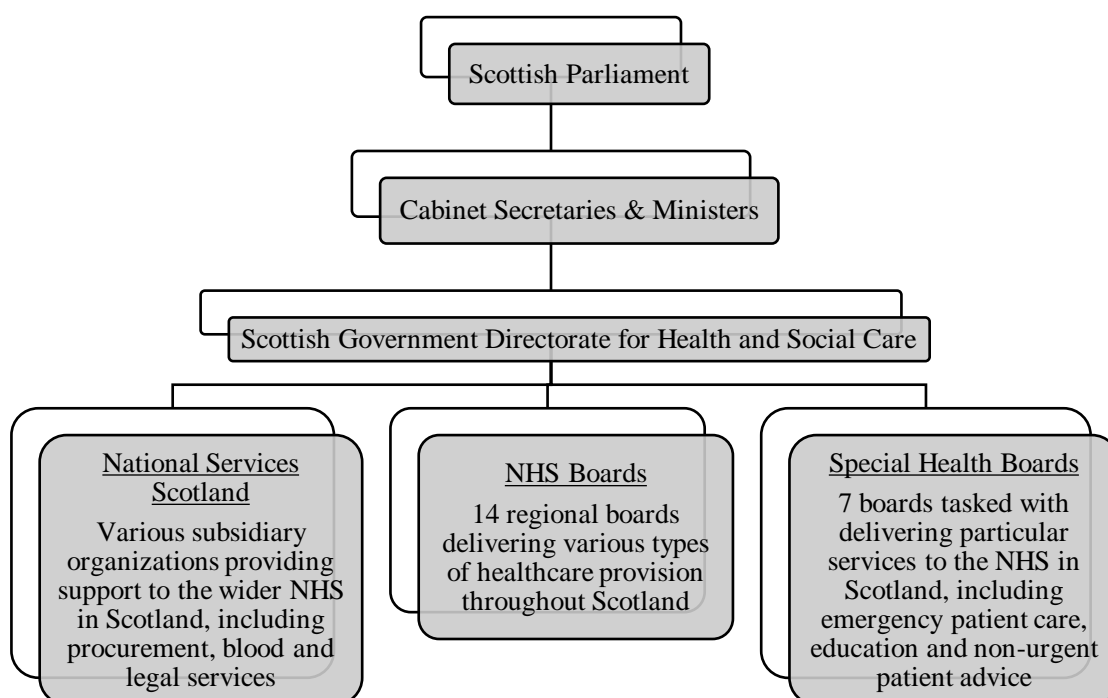
Healthcare provision across the UK was transformed in July 1948 with the introduction of the National Health Service (herein NHS) by the then Health Secretary, Aneurin Bevan, with the NHS in Scotland falling under a different act passed in 1947. Each decade of its existence has seen different health promotion campaigns and developments in combative medical treatments to cope with the evolution of increasingly complex illnesses and diseases. These changes were required amidst drastic demographic shifts, apportioning increased pressure on a free service.



**Table 1.5 Milestones in NHS Scotland's History**

Public sector service provision is coming under increased scrutiny, with improvement, cost saving and operational efficiency likely to be top of health boards' agendas. Table 1.5 illustrates major milestones in NHS Scotland's history, with Figure 1.1 showing part of its organizational structure. From a leadership perspective, there is little empirical research supporting how styles of leadership are implemented throughout an organization (Hartley & Benington, 2010).

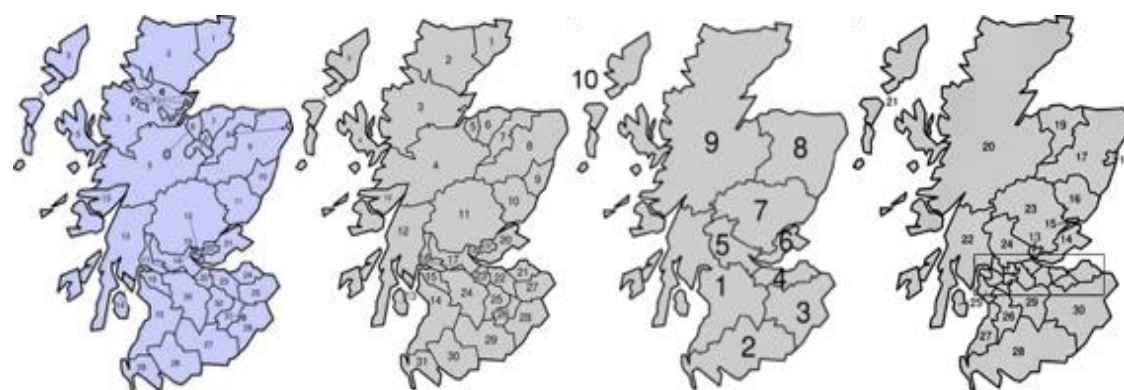
As with many modern organizations, the medical profession has its own governing bodies, providing uniform codes and standards to which members adhere, resonating with Greenwood's (1957) social conscience concept. In modern medicine, clinicians affiliate with the regulatory body, the General Medical Council (GMC) or General Dental Council (GDC), whose core values of excellence, fairness, transparency and collaboration align with the historical definitions of a profession set out in section 1.2.2.



**Figure 1.1 NHS Scotland Organization Structure (adapted from [www.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.scot.nhs.uk))**

### 1.4.3 Local Government

The origins of what we consider local government in Scotland spawn from the 49 countrywide sheriffdoms, with sheriffs governing these areas acting as pivotal legal and administrative representatives from central government, enforcing justice in Scotland (Whetstone, 1977). The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1889 was enacted, with nationwide county councils assuming authority and administrative power over Justices of the Peace (appointed peace keepers) and church boards. Table 1.6 illustrates its historical progression and evolution.



	Local Government (Scotland) Act 1889	Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973	Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994
> 1890	> 1890 > 1975	1975 > 1996	1996 > present
34 counties comprised of: • Mormmaerdoms • Stewartries • Sheriffdoms	33 reorganized counties, with parish council responsibility transferred to district councils	Two tier reorganization into 12 regions, then subdivided into a maximum of 9 districts. Provisions either regional or district	32 areas, governed by a unitary council

**Table 1.6 Evolution of Scottish Local Government**

In Scotland, Councillors from all political parties (Conservative, Green, Independent, Labour, Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party) stand for election and are voted into the Council by local constituents. Subsequently, if one party gains a majority and becomes the administration or opposition, their leader invariably becomes the Leader of the Council or Leader of the Opposition, thus leading their peers in the operation of the council and its various subsidiary operational committees. This means that council leaders are not necessarily always elected for their popularity. Their party may receive a majority of votes in a particular election, which would suggest that constituents are in favour of a party's manifesto, rather than automatically wishing their leader to become the person in charge of the council administration.



These settings share characteristics of organizational membership and elements of professionalism involved. However, local government does not require any particular entry requirements to become a politician, with academia and healthcare requiring minimal time at university and medical school respectively. This was further seen as beneficial for the research in highlighting that it is not only in highly skilled environments in which low-authority occurs.

The history of professions highlights changes that have occurred over time into what we now know as a profession. These professions and roles have been chosen for a combination of reasons, including the high level of skill involved, together with more than the usual degrees of autonomy bestowed upon colleagues in low-authority environments. Leading peers in a professional environment is challenging in any case, but is exacerbated by external pressures, including high levels of intellect and expression of opinion amongst colleagues in academia and healthcare, together with political pressures in local government.

Academia, healthcare and local government have their own specialist journals. These are well established traditions and streams of research and, as will be highlighted in the literature review, empirical work is also well documented. In relation to the literature to be reviewed, academic and clinical settings are sectors which have attracted much interest in the distribution of leadership, yet the political arena has been left relatively under-researched. For the purposes of this research, local government was identified as an interesting overlap between professions and one which does not map directly with an individual's skill-set but contributes to them being suitable for the role. For this reason, all three sectors together formed an interesting triumvirate and merited further examination as a group.

#### **1.4.4 Summary**

Academia and healthcare are environments within which distributed leadership has been explored in great depth, however, local government appeared not to have been. In this vain, and to highlight that distributed leadership issues aren't just experienced in isolated settings, it was necessary to collect data in more than one setting. At the same time, local government was identified as being slightly different from academia and healthcare, in that there are no minimum professional requirements to gain entry, unlike the aforementioned. This highlights that issues faced when distributed leadership is utilised in an organisation cannot be wholly be blamed upon professional competency or training.

## ***1.5 Structure of Thesis***

Social science theses typically follow a common structure, with introduction, literature review and methodology chapters followed by analysis, discussion and conclusions chapters (Phillips & Pugh, 2010). According to Czarniawska (2014, p121) this structure, based upon Greek rhetoric (**in bold** taken from Lanham, 1991), may align similarly with the following:

1. There is something strange going on in the world (**Exordium**)
2. Has somebody else explained it? (**Literature Review**). If not:
3. I'd better go and learn more about it. But how? (**Method**)
4. Now I understand it, I will try to explain it to others. Let me tell a story (**Narration**)
5. What does it remind me of? Is there somebody else who thinks similarly? (**Proof**)
6. This is the end (and the point) of my story (**Peroration**)

The “classic predecessors” (Czarniawska, 2014, p.121) from which this structure originates are purported to have been used in courts of law, with persuasion as the underlying desire, something which future works would strive to emulate in the pursuit of academic agreement.

Following the introductory sections, chapter 2 explores the leadership literature, before moving on to chapter 3, which outlines the method chosen for the research and the philosophy behind it. The chapter opens by supporting the selected ontology and epistemology, as well as the informed dismissal of alternatives. The chapter progresses onto data collection techniques, again highlighting chosen and rejected options, and summarizes with a section on NVivo software use in data analysis. The next chapter presents empirical data, with chapter 5 covering discussion and theory development. Finally, chapter 6 provides conclusions for the entire research project, as well as reviewing the aim, objectives and purpose and suggestions of how the outcomes of the project could potentially be adopted into management practice. Together with limitations of the research, there is a personal reflection in the summative sections.

## ***1.6 Conclusion***

As this research will highlight, highly autonomous working environments are different to other, more familiar hierarchical structures, as well as the individuals within. As highly skilled in their fields, professionals have their own interests, which may be toward an academic institution, clinical health board or local council. Academic and clinical

settings were chosen due to the availability of research already conducted, together with their low-authority characteristics being ideal for this research. Local government was seen as an interesting addition to these settings in that it remains a low-authority setting but marks a digression from the professionally trained roles investigated within academia and healthcare. The individuals within these settings are undoubtedly professionals, however, it is the nature of the environments they are in which proves an interesting hybrid within which to set this research.

Being affiliated with an academic institution, clinical health board or local government organization does not consider alternative affiliation that the individual may have to another, potentially conflicting organization. By such organizational memberships not being commensurate with one another, this brings into question whether the dispersal of leadership within these environments can, in fact, be enacted and whether subsequent, traditional leadership influence can be adopted by the nominal person in charge.

## **2 Literature Review: Distributed Leadership**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

This chapter provides a critical review of the theoretical perspective explored for this study. Whilst systematic literature reviews (see Pawson, 2002; Pettigrew, 2001; Tranfield et al., 2003) have gained increasing credibility in scholarship recently (Denyer & Neely, 2004; Levy & Williams, 2004), particularly in healthcare and public-sector contexts (Kaplan et al., 2010; Rashman et al., 2009), this thorough process would not be possible with such a broad ranging literature as leadership. Nonetheless, this literature review has adopted a systematic philosophy by having a priori objectives and method and using top tier organizational journals. The review firstly focuses on the broader antecedents of leadership and latterly applies distributed leadership (herein DL) to the contexts of this study. Table 2.1 summarizes the research carried out on DL and subsequent conceptual overlap, whilst highlighting the methodical approach taken to the entire review in what is a vast arena of literature. It is important that through the theoretical interpretations and research carried out focus is maintained on context and application in real life settings. Without applying to the environment, their foundation and purpose are somewhat meaningless.

Firstly, the chapter will look at the broader contributory concepts of leadership and the classical theories of great man, charismatic and relational leadership and followership, before moving onto DL in greater depth. The literature review will then progress onto the modern contextualizations and conceptual overlaps of DL, before finishing with an exploration of DL within academia, healthcare and local government, and its applicability and relevance within these contexts.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Theoretical Basis</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Gronn (2000)	Activity Theory	Engeström, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978; Leont'ev, 1978, 1981
Spillane et al. (2004)	Activity Theory	Brown & Duguid, 1991; Giddens, 1979, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991
	Distributed Cognition	Hutchins, 1995; Latour, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pea, 1993; Resnick, 1991
Gronn (2008)	Dual Leadership	Becker & Useem, 1942; Etzioni, 1965
	Functions of Leadership	Schein, 1988
	Leadership	Gibb, 1954
	Leadership Diffusion in Groups	Benne & Sheats, 1948
	Power & influence distribution	French & Snyder, 1959; Dahl, 1975
	Reciprocal Influence	Follett, 1942
	Sharing Leadership	Katz & Kahn, 1978
	Substitutes for Leadership	Kerr & Jermier, 1978
Harris (2009b)	Complexity and Systems	Wheatley, 1994
	Distributed Cognition	Hutchins, 1995
	Functions of the Executive	Barnard, 1968
	Informal Leadership in Groups	Festinger et al. 1950; Heinicke & Bales, 1953
	Professional Learning Communities	Louis & Marks, 1998
	Social Learning Theory	Manz & Sims, 1993
Leithwood et al. (2009a, b & c)	Complexity Science	Uhl-Bien et al. 2007; Osborn & Hunt, 2007
	Distributed Cognition	Jermier & Kerr, 1997; Perkins, 1993; Salomon, 1993
	High Involvement Leadership	Yukl, 2002
	Organizational Learning Theory	Hutchins, 1995; Weick & Roberts, 1993
Hartley & Benington (2010)	Sociological Typology	Burrell & Morgan, 1979
Martin et al., 2015	Hybrid Leadership	Day et al., 2006
	Mission Command Model	Grint, 2011
	Shared Leadership	Bolden, 2011; Pearce & Conger, 2003
	Team Leadership / Followership	Bligh, 2011; Kellerman, 2008

**Table 2.1 Summary of Theoretical Concepts contributing to DL**

Within a group dynamic whose members share common objectives, status is determined by observations of the influence process, with maximum impact being attributed to the perceived leader and strongest individual (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). This infers that we intuitively know what leadership is, yet still struggle to express it adequately and concisely (Northouse, 2001). A multitude of attempts have been made to reach a definition over time, yet a concise aspect remains elusive, as can be seen from the wide-ranging examples in Table 2.2. The three highest ranking results are accentuated in bold. Broadly speaking, definitions appear to have become shorter and more pronounced during the evolution of the concept.

Leadership Definition	Reference (Date order)	Scholar Citations
"...the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement."	Stogdill, 1950	658
"the behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal."	Hemphill & Coons, 1957	883
"...the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants. A leader is one who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends."	Prentice, 1961	59
"...interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals."	Tannenbaum et al., 1961	656
"...the initiation and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction."	Stogdill, 1974	4,388
"...a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers."	Hollander, 1978	616
<b>"...the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization."</b>	<b>Katz &amp; Kahn, 1978</b>	<b>18,537</b>
"...an influence process that enables managers to get their people to do willingly what must be done, do well what ought to be done."	Cribbin, 1981	75
"...the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement."	Rauch & Behling, 1984	286
"...an attempt at influencing the activities of followers through the communication process and toward the attainment of some goal or goals."	Donnelly et al., 1985	27
"...the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation."	Hersey & Blanchard, 1988	636
"Leaders are those who consistently make effective contributions to social order, and who are expected and perceived to do so."	Hosking, 1988	350
"...a development of a clear and complete system of expectations in order to identify, evoke and use the strengths of all resources in the organization the most important of which is people."	Batten, 1989	96
"...an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members...Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership."	Bass, 1990	188
"...the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project."	Cohen, 1990	35
"...a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose."	Jacobs & Jacques, 1990	361

“Leaders are individuals who establish direction for a working group of individuals who gain commitment from this group of members to this direction and who then motivate these members to achieve the direction’s outcomes.”	Conger, 1992	341
“...requires using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people.”	Zaleznik, 1992	1,923
“...is that process in which one person sets the purpose or direction for one or more other persons and gets them to move along together with him or her and with each other in that direction with competence and full commitment.”	Jacques & Clement, 1994	411
<b>“...is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for the shared aspirations.”</b>	<b>Kouzes &amp; Posner, 1995</b>	<b>10,378</b>
<b>“...a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”</b>	<b>Northouse, 2001</b>	<b>9,220</b>
“...is like the Abominable Snowman, whose footprints are everywhere but who is nowhere to be seen.”	Bennis & Nanus, 2007	8,727

**Table 2.2 Definitions of Leadership**



Leadership theorist Stogdill (1974) notes as many definitions of leadership as there are authors attempting to define it, which could explain the confusion and conceptual overlap. Table 2.2 gives credence to Stogdill's (1974) proposition yet does not constitute an exhaustive exploration of leadership definitions. Leadership as a topic of debate arguably dates back as far as the sixth century (Allio, 2013). However, personal opinions on the nature of leaders and leadership are offered anecdotally with scant empirical evidence to substantiate them (Harris, 2008), leading to the often-incorrect overuse of the term. Levin (2006) further suggests that a lot of research is mere "opinion garbed in the language of research" (p.43). As well as this, leadership theory has shifted from focusing on individuals and traits toward improvement and relationships reliant upon dispersal of activities throughout a team (Burke et al., 2006, p.289):

"Many of the researchers who are investigating leadership in teams do so from a functional approach where "[the leader's] main job is to do, or get done whatever is not being adequately handled for group needs" (McGrath, 1962, p.5). Within this approach, the leader is effective to the degree that he/she ensures that all functions critical to task and team maintenance are completed. While it is not necessary that the leadership functions be accomplished by a single person (i.e., it may be distributed throughout the team), the leader is responsible for ensuring that these functions are accomplished."

Further, Klein et al.'s (2006) work analyses clinical teams, whose compositions change on a daily, sometimes hourly basis. As such, these alternate leadership styles have been said to contribute toward increased organizational performance (Angle et al., 2006; Bycio et al., 1995; de Hoogh et al., 2004; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Ogbonna & Harris, 1999). With previous leadership research having been heavily leader-focused (Hollander, 1992a, b) and a somewhat unbalanced bias toward leadership traits (Fairhurst, 2007) and behaviours (Likert, 1961), published definitions on leadership report the controlling of others for the advancement and benefit of the organization (Lawler, 2008). More contemporary views of leadership bestow increased autonomy upon team players, including empowerment and directive leadership traits (Srivastava et al., 2006; Yun et al., 2005). It is argued that an increasingly complex articulation of leadership can only benefit an organization, as reliance upon a single leadership style no longer achieves the best results (Goleman, 2000).

This chapter provides an overview of leadership theory and followership, with particular focus granted to DL (Gronn, 2002a, b). The chapter closes by assessing DL in academia, healthcare and local government, which will theoretically underpin the study and allow for analysis of data collected to identify gaps and new contributions to existing research.

## 2.2 *A brief review of leadership thinking and theory*

### 2.2.1 Great-man and Trait Theory

Existing literature supports the notion that the underpinning constructs of leadership are broadly masculine (Koenig et al., 2011), as well as having an influence on the metrics against which other categories are made (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000). Even by name, antecedents and seminal concepts of leadership do not appreciate the role of women in leadership positions. Coupled with this, the masculine-oriented effect this has on revolutionary concepts may prove problematic. When considering the origins of the terms *leader* or *leadership*, one concept which is prominent within early academic interest is great-man or trait theory, purported to be one of the first systematic, concentrated studies of leadership (Bass, 1981; Kilpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord et al., 1986). The great-man hypothesis is the foundation of what is known as trait leadership theory, with early proponents including Carlyle (1841) viewing history as a “biography of great men” (p.47), inferring that leaders who rose to power were born, rather than made. He also proposed that by studying influential people and their unique ability to inspire with their talents and physical characteristics, a person’s nature could be positively influenced:

“The Great Man was always as lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame” (Carlyle, 1841, p.125).

Nonetheless, Carlyle’s (1841) work attracted criticism, most vociferously from Spencer (1896), who intimated that ascribing events with particular individual choices was a “hopelessly primitive, childish and unscientific position” (see Segal, 2000, p.3). Further, Spencer (1896) attested that such individuals referred to as *heroes* were, in fact, formed as a product of both time and particular social conditions present:

“You must admit that the genesis of a great man depends on the long series of complex influences which has produced the race in which he appears, and then social state into which that race has slowly grown... Before he can re-make society, his society must make him” (p.31).

Despite this criticism, support for Carlyle’s (1841) work came from Galton (1869) in examining the familial relationship to power, in which he concludes that extraordinary intelligence is a pivotal aspect of leadership and, as such, is inherited not developed. From the seminal roots of great-man theory, interest and assumptions digressed from born leaders to a focus on the psychological, biological and behavioural characteristics, thus trait theory was born. Early empirical studies of schoolchildren highlighted the likely

attributes of leaders and non-leaders including intelligence, daring, low emotionality and goodness (Terman, 1904). It was later summarized that “the approach to the study of leadership has usually been and perhaps must always be through the study of traits” (Cowley, 1931, p.144), promoting the idea that leadership study should initially begin through a trait-based lens. A common thread through great-man and trait theories is the individual qualities of the leader; however, this does not automatically presume leadership exists with several heroic figures, hence Cowley’s (1931) statement.

This heroic leadership interest directed subsequent research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in spite of other concepts such as situational leadership, which will be discussed later, being prominent in the mid-1900s (Stogdill, 1974), trait theory remained a fundamental tenet in the development of the phenomenon. Great-man theory was widely perceived as not having sufficient detail encompassing followers and situation to enable a comprehensive understanding of leaders and leadership (Baron & Byrne, 1987; Blum & Naylor, 1956; Ghiselli & Brown, 1955; Muchinsky, 1983; Secord & Backman, 1974; Malakyan, 2014), and was further seen by some as an outdated concept (Adair, 1988). Stogdill (1974) reviewed literature from 1904 to 1947, summarizing that:

“The evidence suggests that leadership is a relation that exists between persons in a social situation, and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations” (p.65).

A further study by Ghiselli and Brown (1955) criticized the universal applicability of this form of leadership in various contexts, acting to defame the concept even further:

“Under one set of circumstances an individual will be a good leader and under others he will be a poor one” (p.471).

A final nail in the coffin for trait leadership discourse was made by Baron and Bryne (1987), who observed that:

“The conclusion ... that leaders do not differ from followers in clear and easily recognized ways, remains valid” (p.405).

Along with reviews from Bird (1940), Jenkins (1947) and Mann (1959), this seemingly began the demise of the trait perspective of leadership. Some saw the lack of attention given to followers and situation a good thing in making the concept less complex (Northouse, 2007); however, this ignorance could lead to stifling the development of other, future concepts of leadership. Traits are, and continue to be, prominently positioned and engrained within modern leadership conceptualization (Bass, 2008), despite conflicting research regarding their utility (Judge et al., 2009). In combating this

lack of overall understanding, newer concepts of leadership have been developed to consider relationships, team working and situation as central constructs.

There is a misconception that leadership is merely a collection of personality traits, with conceptualizations diversifying away from the traditional realms of individual characteristics (Stogdill, 1974; Stogdill & Coons, 1945; DuBrin & Dalglish, 2003; Jones et al., 2014). In establishing the origins opposing traits, initial doubt was investigated by Stogdill (1974) who reported that, in fact, no one single set of traits differentiated a leader from a non-leader, and that “a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits” (p.64). More recently, the trait approach was deemed “too simplistic” (Conger & Kanungo, 1998, p.38), with House and Aditya (1997, p.410) highlighting:

“There were few, if any, universal traits associated with effective leadership. Consequently, there developed among the community of leadership scholars near consensus that the search for universal traits was futile.”

This traditional view of traits-based leadership study, differentiating leaders from non-leaders by characteristics, gradually gave way to considerations of context and environment, with investigators commenting that any trait-influenced effect on leadership depends on the individual situation (Blau, 1964; Burns, 1978; Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992; Hughes et al., 1996; Jones et al., 2014). Prior to this, and somewhat coincidentally, Stogdill (1974) did not call for the abolition of trait study. Moreover, he highlighted the need for an approach combining traits and situations to best assist organizational leaders. Insights concluded that some leaders who may be successful in low level leadership positions may not be equally so in the upper echelons of a hierarchy. Yet, this un-transferability of leadership does not automatically assume leader success within organizations. Ghiselli and Brown (1955) promote their fallout with trait-based leadership theory and its ability to predict leader victory, with their research concluding:

“If there is a general trait of leadership that plays a part in all situations it is relatively unimportant in determining an individual’s success as a leader. To a considerable extent the manifestation of leadership is determined by the social situation. Under one set of circumstances an individual will be a good leader and under others he will be a poor one” (p.471).

Ghiselli and Brown (1955) pay heed to the potential for particular traits having an effect on leader outcomes, even at least a comparatively unimportant one. However, Muchinsky (1983) has a much more abrupt supposition, highlighting “there is little or no

connection between personality traits and leader effectiveness” (p.403), with similar sentiments expressed by Landy (1985). Aside from these criticisms and, more constructively, there is support for the notion that the trait approach commonly circumnavigates actual leader effectiveness (Judge et al., 2009) in favour of mere follower perception of leader effectiveness (Lord et al., 1986). This demise of the trait approach to leadership theory cleared the way for other behaviour and situation-oriented styles to become prominent in academic scholarship (Bass, 1990), yet it remains a heavily influential aspect of new and developing theoretical concepts. Essentially, the above statements assert that different traits are not only utilized in different situations, but perhaps appropriate and applicable for different levels of leadership (Nichols & Cottrell, 2014). One explanation for this could be that personal traits, which complement leadership traits, may not be consistent with the objectives of the organization and, therefore will, not be effective (Fisher et al., 2006). To combat this, Snowden (2007, p.604) indicates that leaders first need to rate the “level of complexity” to the corresponding environment and action as appropriate.

<i>Stogdill (1948)</i>	<i>Mann (1959)</i>	<i>Bass (1990)</i>	<i>Kirkpatrick &amp; Locke (1991)</i>	<i>Yukl &amp; Van Fleet (1992)</i>
Adaptability Alertness Cooperativeness Dependability Initiative Persistence Self-confidence Sociability	Adjustment Conservatism Dominance Extroversion Masculinity	Adjustment Adaptability Aggressiveness Alertness Ascendancy, dominance Emotional balance, control Independence, nonconformity Integrity Originality, creativity Self-confidence	Drive, achievement Honesty, integrity Self-confidence	Emotional maturity High energy level Integrity Self-confidence Stress tolerance
<i>Hogan et al. (1994)</i>	<i>House &amp; Aditya (1997)</i>	<i>Northouse (1997)</i>	<i>Yukl (1998)</i>	<i>Daft (1999)</i>
Agreeableness Conscientiousness Emotional stability Surgency	Achievement motivation Adjustment Prosocial influence motivation Self-confidence	Determination Integrity Self-confidence Sociability	Achievement orientation Emotional maturity Energy Level Internal locus of control Low need for affiliation Personality integrity Socialised power motivation Stress tolerance	Alertness Originality, creativity Personal integrity Self-confidence

**Table 2.3 Effective Leader Traits (adapted from Judge et al., 2002)**

Table 2.3 summarizes the traits of an effective leader following Stogdill's (1948) seminal critique. It is evident there are characteristics consistent throughout leadership studies, including:

- Self-confidence (7 / 10)
- Honesty, integrity or equivalent (5 / 10)
- Emotional control / stability (4 / 10)
- Adjustment, adaptability (4 / 10)
- Alertness (3 / 10)
- Originality / creativity (2 / 10)

Equally, there are some that are completely isolated within one study, reinforcing the situational nature of traits and characteristics involved in leadership. These include:

- Conservatism
- Surgency
- Low affiliation requirement
- Masculinity
- Aggressiveness

It is noteworthy that from Table 2.3 the historical inclination to specify or preclude by means of gender, as in Mann's (1959) work, no longer appears in more recent discourse. Keeping the trait approach in mind, researchers have placed increased emphasis on more visionary and charismatic leadership (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Zaccaro, 2007; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977), concepts which shall now be explored in the proceeding section and how these coincide with and influence this study.

### **2.2.2 Charismatic Leadership**

As evidenced in Table 2.4, charismatic leadership bears striking resemblance to trait leadership theory, in that particular qualities and behaviours are displayed inferring the presence of a refined style of trait leadership in a different guise. The term *charisma* describes the type of attribute able to charm and inspire commitment in others (Anon, 2017), with Weber (1947) most famously proposing it as a unique personality feature granting powers of divine origin and resulting in the individual being treated as a leader by others. Yet, even before charismatic leadership was recognized formally as a concept, Weber (1947) further appreciated the pivotal function followers played in verifying leaders' charisma (Bryman, 1992; House, 1976).

Charismatic leaders are risk-takers, induce emotive reactions and make followers extraordinarily motivated (Freud, 1938; Zaleznik, 2009). House (1976) developed the idea that charismatic leaders behave in a way that displays particular tendencies and to

encourage followers to act in a particular way, thus achieving personal goals. As well as being strong role models, their dominant character and confidence contributes to overall leader effectiveness (Northouse, 2016). In Table 2.4, House's (1976) personality characteristics resemble the trait attributes in Table 2.3, which aim to stimulate follower responses. This goes further in highlighting the closeness between trait and charismatic leadership theories.

<b>Personality Characteristics</b>	<b>Behaviours</b>	<b>Effects on Followers</b>
Dominant	Arouses motives	Affection towards leader
Desire to influence	Articulates goals	Emotional involvement
Self-confident	Communicates high expectations	Heightened goals
Strong moral values	Expresses confidence	Identification with leader
	Sets strong role model	Increased confidence
	Shows competence	Leader / follower similarity
		Obedience
		Unquestioning acceptance
		Trust leader's ideology

**Table 2.4 Charismatic Leadership Attributes (adapted from House, 1976)**

House's (1976) research sparked renewed interest in charismatic leadership (Conger, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). One particularly noteworthy project prior to this (Shamir et al., 1993) revealed that followers' self-concepts are altered as a result of this form of leadership, with attempts made to link individual identity to the organization. In their capacity as leader, the charismatic individual aims at promoting intrinsic rewards of work, whilst demoting the extrinsic ones. This is done with the view that followers will then see their work as a continuation and expression of themselves (Northouse, 2016). However, for this relationship to work, reciprocity is essential, with followers concurrently influencing the attitudes and behaviours of their leader (House, 1976; Bryman, 1992; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Charisma as a relationship, rather than a displayed, tangible individual attribute, has been proposed previously (Kakabadse & Kakabadse, 1999):

“The contrasting view is that charisma is a relationship and not a characteristic of a leader's personality. Charisma exists only because followers desire to be led and to be given direction concerning how to behave” (p.201).

Charismatic leaders are known for having exceptional influence upon followers and have the ability to increase commitment toward a common goal, sometimes incurring personal sacrifice (Shamir et al., 1993). Kakabadse and Kakabadse (1999) continue, highlighting the lengths followers will go to when working under a charismatic leader:



“The willingness on the part of the followers to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of being led to a collective goal, is the distinguishing feature of the attribution element of charisma” (p.201).

This assists to “validate charisma in these leaders” (Northouse, 2001, p.133), similar to Weber’s (1947) proposition, with focus being upon the needs of the institution they lead (Simplicio, 2011).

However, despite appreciation of this mutual understanding and relationship, any disparity between the traits of subordinates and superiors could be detrimental to overall organizational performance (Nichols & Cottrell, 2014; Bin Ahmad, 2008; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), as both parties do not share consistency. In an attempt to overcome inequity of power distribution, leadership is often transferred to those within a team, with attempts to reach a comprehensive overview of the social process being paramount (Barker, 2001; Hosking, 1988). It is common for disquietude to manifest over “power, authority and inequality” (Harris, 2013, p.546) in any situation where leadership is enacted.

Within charismatic leadership, Jung and Sosik (2006) aim at distinguishing the features of a leader and a non-leader, partly in response to the increasingly dynamic, unpredictable nature of organizations. These kinds of institutions, in turn, require a particular type of leader to create and instil a vision amongst workers to compete in a global environment (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Kets de Vries, 1998). Jung and Sosik’s (2006) results highlight self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to attain social power and self-actualization as key components demonstrated by charismatic leaders, providing a solid link between this newer form of leadership theory and its trait-oriented predecessor.

Until this point, the majority of leadership theories have focused upon the individual leader and attributes they display whilst leading, thus attributing them to a pre-set and pre-determined type of leader. Weak linkages have been made around the pivotal relationship between leader and follower, and more focused on how the leader gets things done rather than the sheer importance of the relationship. Sharmir et al.’s (1993) study highlights enabling followers to express their individualistic tendencies; however, little consideration has been given to how such a dyadic, reciprocal relationship can shape an organization and effectiveness of teams toward common goals. Charismatic leadership places heavy reliance upon how a leader can influence their followers. The following

sections analyse relational leadership and followership, before delving deeper into the intricacies of DL, the first main theoretical body for this research.

### **2.2.3 Relational and Shared Leadership**

Despite relationship-centric behaviours having been identified within even the earliest conceptualizations of leadership (Stogdill & Coons, 1957), the term and concept of relational leadership remain in their infancy (Brower et al., 2000; Drath, 2001; Murrell, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2003, 2005), with its meaning still being open to interpretation (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

“We consider the relational perspective and [the approaches within it] ...to be at the forefront of emerging leadership thrusts... The relational focus is one that moves beyond unidirectional or even reciprocal leader / follower relationships to one that recognizes leadership wherever it occurs; it is not restricted to a single or even a small set of formal or informal leaders; and, in its strongest form, functions as a dynamic system embedding leadership, environmental, and organizational aspects” (Hunt & Dodge, 2001, p.448).

Hunt & Dodge’s (2001) summation places emphasis on not only leadership as a function of organization, but also as being influenced by what is happening in the surrounding environment. Instead of relying on one individual formally leading, this style of leadership begins to investigate the dispersal of leadership amongst leaders and followers, with neither being able to function in isolation from one another.

Historically, the concept progresses Follett’s (1949) idea of reciprocal control, a non-coercive “coordinating of all functions, that is a collective self-control” (p.226) which disperses leadership throughout organization. In settings where this type of leadership is employed, authority is shared amongst people rather than relying on one or two individuals (Fletcher, 1999). As established, relationships are key in a dyadic leadership exchange between the perceived leaders and their followers in what is referred to as a community (Gudykunst, 1994; Komives et al., 1998). Prior to this, Gardner (1990) proposes the following constituent parts of community: diversity, shared norms and values, free-flowing communication, an atmosphere of trust, effective participation in leadership, awareness of the larger systems to which a community belongs.

Unlike relationships formed under, or as a result of, charismatic leadership, relationally formed ones place a more nuanced emphasis on “leadership that values inclusivity and strengthens all members to develop common purposes,” adding that relational leadership is a “process of people together attempting to accomplish change or make a difference to

benefit the common good” (Komives et al., 1998, p.68). With this in mind, Komives et al. (1998) emphasize that relationships are the single most important aspect of effective leadership, with demise being attributed to personality clashes, disagreement of expectations of roles, ideological differences and dysfunctional communication (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001; Gudykunst, 1994; Trenholm & Jensen, 2011).

However, in keeping with the charismatic relationship view of leadership, relational leadership has similar characteristics to trait leadership, yet there is an increased focus on what traits are acting to achieve, that is a stronger, more collegiate relationship between leaders and followers (Brower et al., 2000; Somech, 2003; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). There is shared opinion that:

“a deepened understanding of effective leadership is built of relationships, and that the quality of relationships reflects the quality of leadership. Relational leadership is introduced as a forum for enhancing effective leadership. The approach is centered on interpersonal relationships” (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001, p.70).

This confident view of relational leadership is very much dependent on leaders and followers contributing to the two-way connection (Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001), with resulting mutual benefit (Cogliser et al., 2009). Ospina & Hittleman (2011) focus their research on dispersing leadership responsibility, ensuring there is a collective element to its operation. Counter to this, Ballinger & Schoorman (2007) attempt to balance the relationship between leaders and followers. Equally, a leader should be aware of opportunities to further develop and refine relationships between players within their organization (Carmeli et al., 2009). There is a shared understanding that context and process are left under-appreciated and under-researched in both relational and distributed leadership fields, with over-emphasis placed on individuals, their traits and influence upon followers (Contractor et al., 2012; Denis et al., 2012; Gronn, 2009a). Balancing the relationship between leaders and followers aims to create a more collegiate, equitable distribution of control and influence and, further, followership takes even more heavily into account the influence a follower can have in this reciprocal relationship. Yet, not all forms of leadership encompass this level of togetherness between organizational parties.

However, this style of leadership does have disadvantages. In instances of increased danger and rapidly changing conditions which demand quick decision-making and a more authoritarian leadership approach (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001) there is not necessarily the opportunity to consult everyone within a team. Further, a relational perspective of leadership and organization sees them as being formed by “human social constructions

that emanate from the rich connections and interdependencies of organizations and their members” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p.655; Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Hosking et al., 1995). In high-paced environments, rich connections may exist between members; however, time constraints in the decision-making process may inhibit this being an appropriate leadership style to employ. With a more balanced dispersal of power and authority, combined with a greater sense of reciprocity, the next section assesses followership as a contributory concept toward DL.

In considering the aforementioned ignorance toward context, situational leadership should be considered within this literature review as a concept which could perhaps be said to tailor to the needs arising and the people within the organization it is being used. Blank et al. (1990) conclude that there is little or no correlation between subordinate readiness or maturity, and the effectiveness of the leader. Yet prior to this, Hersey’s (1984) situational leadership model considers maturity and readiness of followers. Illustrated in Table 2.5, the situational leadership model advises on the type of situational leadership to employ in response to differing levels of subordinate maturity and readiness (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

<p><b><u>High Relationship – Low Task</u></b> <b><u>(Participating)</u></b></p> <p><i>Leadership through supporting</i></p> <p>Use when followers are able but unwilling or insecure</p>	<p><b><u>High Relationship – High Task</u></b> <b><u>(Selling)</u></b></p> <p><i>Leadership through coaching</i></p> <p>Use when followers are unable but willing or motivated</p>
<p><b><u>Low Relationship – Low Task</u></b> <b><u>(Delegating)</u></b></p> <p><i>Leadership through delegation</i></p> <p>Use when followers are able and willing or motivated</p>	<p><b><u>Low Relationship – High Task</u></b> <b><u>(Telling)</u></b></p> <p><i>Leadership through directing</i></p> <p>Use when followers are unable and unwilling or insecure</p>

**Table 2.5 Situational Leadership Model (adapted from Hersey (1984, p.63)**

Empirical research carried out in different organizational environments substantiates claims that only certain tailored styles outlined in the quadrants above will work in certain situations (Goodson et al., 1989; Butler & Reese, 1991; Blank et al., 1990) and that certain managers and leaders prefer using particular styles over others (Avery, 2001). This further shows that the leader / follower relationship is essential to achievement of outcomes. This review will now begin to migrate towards the concept of DL, however, before this, followership and co-leadership are considered in the next section.

#### **2.2.4 Followership and Co-Leadership**

Hollander and Webb (1955) argue that the attributes of leadership and followership are separated, concluding that non-leaders are not appealing as followers. However, to get into a position of leadership, an individual will have been a follower. Collegiality and relationships are purported to be non-existent between leaders and followers within organizations, with Buber (1958) summarizing a mere object-subject interaction. However, from the theories above, there is evidence countering this, showing leaders and followers play essential organizational roles.

Preliminary research understood leaders cannot be, and are not, protected from follower influence (Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971; Vroom & Yetton, 1973), despite followers having historically been treated somewhat passively. They act to alleviate the influence and behaviours of their leader (Lord et al., 1999), with subsequent ignorance of the follower to leader flow (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hollander, 1980, 1992a, b). Accordingly, Hersey et al. (1996) purport that followers possessing lower levels of readiness need more direction, and those with higher levels need less direction and are more task-orientated. It can therefore be summarized that followers, to some extent, dictate the style of leadership employed and exerted upon them, linking in with prior research (House, 1976; Bryman, 1992; Howell & Shamir, 2005). Developing from this is the underexplored dimension of followers and leaders together subscribing to the same organization as one another. If leadership is partly based upon individual traits, with consideration granted to a follower's vision of their perfect leader, this idealistic description is likely to change depending on the situation (Nichols & Cottrell, 2014).

According to Kelley (1992), there is a tenacious fixation on conforming, which has led to issues in leadership theory and practice, and a lack of attention being granted to the broader, forward-thinking picture. The "sheep" follower mentality, in that one will automatically follow another, has been disregarded (Kelley, 1992, p.37) from an increased appreciation of rights and freedom (Malakyan, 2014).

Such archaic, yet prominent, leader-centric approaches have been superseded in favour of mutuality, humanness and genuine relationship and dialogue between leaders and followers (Friedman, 2002). However, despite the appreciation that followership and leadership are pivotal aspects of organization, little attention has been granted to followership within leadership research (Baker, 2007; Bligh, 2011; Carsten et al., 2010; Kelley, 2008; Sy, 2010). The concept of followers and followership are integral to

leadership, yet despite their importance, previous trait theory addresses neither (Malakyan, 2014). The extant research appears to dichotomize the two concepts and they remain isolated from one another instead of being considered in tandem. Previous research has focused on two overarching themes; followers as recipients of leader influence (see Bass, 2008) and followers as constructors of leaders and leadership (see Meindl, 1990; Meindl et al., 1985). Some take this idea further, offering that leadership lies in the minds of the followers, rather than in the leaders' (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Lord et al., 1984; Offermann et al., 1994).

However, for these to be functional and applicable, there needs to be a societal appreciation of both leadership and followership as viable concepts in their own right. Leadership has not been previously understood as a co-created process between leaders and followers (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). In line with this underappreciated, under-researched relationship, it is well documented that leaders, essentially, cannot exist without followers, as this is the fundamental basis of any relationship; without relationships, both parties cease to exist (Kellerman, 2007; Rost, 1993, 2008). This functional assertion is strengthened in research, with Van Vugt et al., (2008, p.193) arguing that:

“First, leadership cannot be studied apart from followership and that an adequate account of the leadership process must consider the psychology of followers. Second, the goals of leaders and followers do not always converge, a fact that creates a fundamental ambivalence in the relationship between leaders and followers.”

This ambiguity has subsequently led to a dearth of available literature into the practical application of followership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Therefore, the current study problematizes the assumption that followers see themselves as part of the same organization as those leading. As will be discussed, DL's relevance and applicability has been highlighted for use in various sectors, but greater conceptual understanding is required to implement the process effectively.

Particular attention must be paid to followership, in that there is appreciation of a leadership role to be played and this involves delegation of tasks amongst players. Uhl-Bien & Pillai (2007, p.196) see this as passing responsibility to the leader, with followers ready to receive reciprocal influence: “if leadership involves actively influencing others, then followership involves allowing oneself to be influenced.” DeRue & Ashford (2010) similarly propose allowing leadership identity to be given to someone, whilst identifying

oneself as a follower. This new development toward a follower-centric perspective to leadership theory proposes those leading in the social system are partially controlled by its influences (i.e., followers) (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Lord et al., 2001; Lord et al., 1999). Concurrently, researchers have placed behaviours and reactions of followers at the front as a driving force for leader behaviour (Carsten et al., 2010; Collinson, 2006; Oc & Bashshur, 2013). This highlights the reciprocal nature of leader / follower transactions, meaning that each has causal effect on the other.

In considering leader / follower transactions, it is pertinent to pay attention to co-leadership, used to describe “two leaders in vertically contiguous positions who share the responsibilities of leadership” (Jackson & Parry, 2008, p. 82). Co-leadership positions are said to be inhabited by “truly exceptional deputies – extremely talented men and women, often more capable than their more highly acclaimed superiors” (Heenan & Bennis, 1999, p.6) and the practice is purported to improve overall leadership effectiveness (Heenan & Bennis, 1999; O’Toole et al., 2002; Sally, 2002) especially in difficult situations. In exploring further, co-leadership is not just confined to top levels within an organization and can be useful and applicable throughout. Rather than viewing each of these concepts in isolation, co-leadership has been considered as a constituent part at one end of a continuum, with shared leadership in the middle and DL at the other end (Jackson & Parry, 2008), hence it’s consideration here.

The concepts of trait, charismatic and relational leadership, coupled with followership and co-leadership, have been explored in an attempt to map previous leadership theory as having a dominant effect on its development. Moving from a single heroic figure as leader to more collegiate, team-influenced leadership styles over time also stimulates consideration of previously under-researched phenomena, such as situation and relationships. The next section combines these concepts to form a framework known as DL. Origins and application will be assessed in complex organizational settings, with further examples in context related to this study.

### **2.2.5 Towards Distributed Leadership**

Although the above concepts have gained academic following and created attention in their own right, there remains a gap in considering leadership involving more than one heroic figure. Leadership has long been considered as an individual-centric phenomenon, with a bias toward traits (see Fairhurst, 2007) and behaviours (Likert, 1961; Stogdill & Coons, 1957) as precursors to the process of leadership and resulting organizational

outcomes (Meindl, 1995). More contemporary research reminds that even early research appreciated that “leaders are traditionally treated as heroes or villains” (Oc & Bashshur, 2013) in accordance with organizational performance, who are often unfairly praised for success and criticized for failings (Kelley, 1988; Meindl, 1995). Contention has arisen in proposing DL, as some feel:

“focusing exclusively on either one or more formal leaders...is unlikely to generate robust insights into school leadership practice” (Spillane et al., 2001, p.27).

However, Russell (2003) suggests this dismisses these types of relationships that are taking place in the majority of hierarchical organizations and cannot be ignored. DL is considered as an alternative to individuals as sole influencers in organization, something researchers have become infatuated by and fixated upon (Harris, 2009a, b). The following section first of all considers DL as a theoretical option for this research, with subsequent sections referring to the particular settings involved and why DL is an appropriate foundation on which to base this research.

## **2.3 *Distributed Leadership***

### **2.3.1 Definitions**

Gibb (1958) was the seminal authorial voice considering the express term *distributed leadership*, arguing that “leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group” (p.884). This means members of a team take turns exchanging roles depending on the situation and skills demanded. Prior to this, Benne and Sheats (1948) researched the dispersal of leadership function, without using the term DL. Gibb’s (1954) earlier research supports more scattered leadership occurring when:

“a group member achieves the status of a group leader for time being in proportion as he [sic] participates in group activities and demonstrates his capacity for contributing more than others to the group achievement of the group goal” (p.902).

Even during the embryonic stages of DL, Gibb’s (1954) appreciation of not only organizational fluctuations, but personality issues and new members entering a team, has led to a diverse interest range on the subject in various contexts. Further, Gibb’s (1954) attention to numerical frequency of individual acts of leadership, and subsequent identifiable patterns, distinguished his interpretation between different forms of distribution, and had a dramatic effect on future studies of this form of leadership.



Following Gibb's (1958) research, the concept lay relatively dormant until its renaissance by Brown and Hosking (1986), with only very few references made to the notion during the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Barry, 1991; Beck & Peters, 1981; Gregory, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1997; Senge, 1993).

The concept is reported as being delineated from other leadership forms as an alternative to the dichotomy of individual agency and traits (see Bass, 1985 & Northouse, 2007) and a collective, system-orientated makeup (see Jacques, 1989 & Uhl-Bien, 2006). In accordance with this digression from traditionally entrenched traits and behaviours of leadership, DL has become popular amongst researchers as a force which places "leadership practice centre stage" (Spillane, 2006, p.25). This enables observation of leadership as a more collegiate, shared function within organization, with some authors going so far as to say that it is "a mantra for reshaping leadership practice" (Seashore Louise et al., 2009, p157). More traditional forms of leadership appear stagnant and identify leader and follower as separate parties, with the leader providing the direction and the follower perceived as an afterthought (Bolden, 2007). Yet it is unclear within current DL literature whether reciprocity in the leader, follower, co-leader construction of organization is either assumed and/or problematized, which forms a fundamental tenet of this research. The assumption is that DL does not, in fact, address a multiple organizational membership on the part of the individual, but focuses and wrongly accepts that everyone is part of the same organization. Following Jacques & Clement's (e.g., 1994) conceptualization of stratified systems, Hunt (1991; Hunt & Ropo, 1995) focus on multilevel leadership within organizations. Despite this, studies of the individual leader continue to dominate DL scholarship.

However, despite numerous attempts to concisely define DL since, there remains a lack of understanding and definition for the phenomenon, even with vast amounts of literature being produced (Bennett et al., 2003). One of these definitions comes from Kayworth & Leidner (2002), who purport DL to be concerned with remote locational control where only electronic communication is used to exert leader influence in an age where workplaces are becoming less traditional. Their research highlighted that there were few differences to the characteristics of good leadership displayed electronically compared to face-to-face, including empathy, understanding and concern. If anything, those exerting leadership electronically have a more challenging task, as a result of a reduced "solution set" (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002, p.30) to employ during conflict. Their research highlighted scope for further research, which included the idea that absence of non-verbal

cues, electronically, may render an environment more complex to lead in. In today's increasingly complex organizations, together with flexible working patterns and the rapid exchange of information, virtual teams are more commonplace (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002). Researchers argue that DL has been subject to great attention as a post-heroic interpretation of leadership (Badaracco, 2001), whilst being used to describe a particular style of leadership as "devolved, shared or dispersed" (Harris, 2008, p.173). This term has subsequently been misinterpreted and mis-represented, leading to confusion of concepts and for it to be placed under the ubiquitous banner of shared or team leadership, with the idea that everyone leads (Harris, 2007).

Despite the numerous contradicting definitions, outlined in Table 2.6, leaders and followers share the assumption that there is a leadership function to be performed, despite inconsistency. Conflict around task and process, together with power struggles are more likely to arise in the absence of formal authority, according to Barry (1991). Barry (1991, p.31) titled a paper on DL, describing the style of leadership as including "boss-less" or "self-managed team[s]." He asserts that "without the presence of formal authority, power struggles and conflict around both task and process issues surface more often" (Barry, 1991, p.32). He suggests leadership responsibility can be divided amongst players to deal with such ambivalence. The dismissal of formal roles of responsibility toward a more concerted, self-initiated action does not preclude hierarchy and is not a key aspect of DL: more a defining characteristic. A self-managed team suggests everyone is involved in the leadership process, meaning at any one time, there is more than one person contributing to the success of that team and its activities (Harris, 2008). Mayrowetz's (2008) research reported similar findings and ways to express them as Bennett et al. (2003), including an analytical lens for human interaction to be viewed.

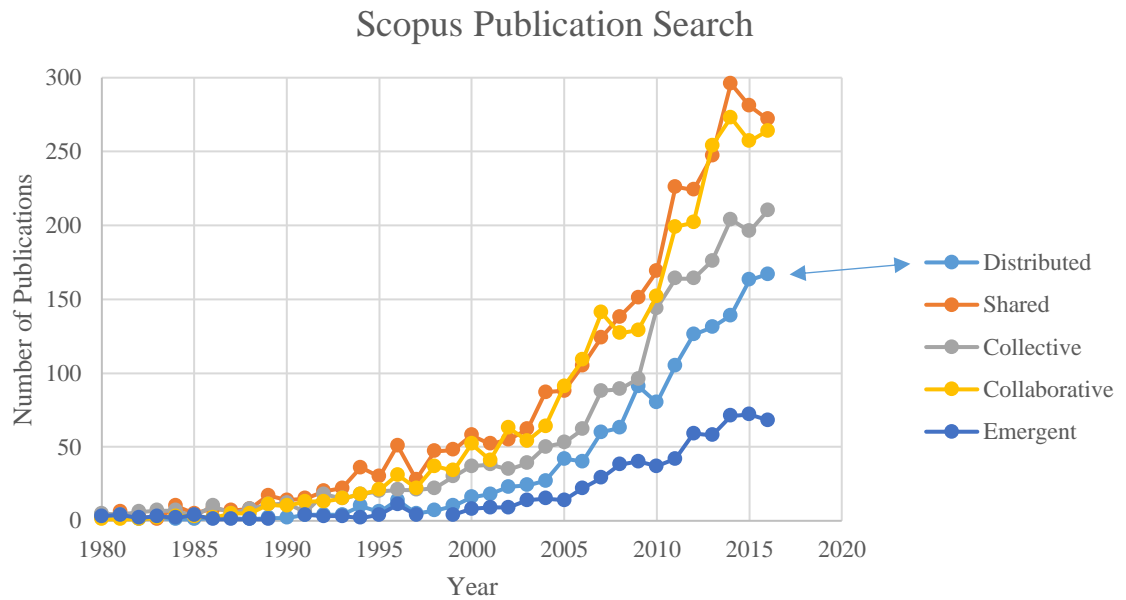
Treating distributed leadership as...	
•	a theoretical lens to connect concertive actions, people and resources
•	a representative distribution of leadership and decision-making influence
•	having an influence on productivity, yet not everyone will be a good leader
•	describing human capacity, with increased self-awareness and contextual issues

**Table 2.6 Distributed Leadership Approaches (Mayrowetz, 2008)**

Aside from evidence substantiating the complexity and evolution of DL, researchers remain infatuated by the supposed romance of leadership (Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985), where parties are overzealous in crediting an individual with success. Earlier conceptual suggestions of leadership are dominated by the inference of an individual at

the helm of an organization being the sole influential figure, with Rost (1993, p.70) highlighting that “leadership is basically doing what the leader wants done.” Research has proliferated this hierarchical assumption, with such figures atop an organization having overall directional influence and being figureheads, with subordinates as followers looking up to them (MacBeath, 1998; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Yet, despite this divine perception of those in charge, research has failed to produce empirical support to verify organizational improvement attributed to these individuals (Thorpe et al., 2007). Even research that has attempted to produce such evidence (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006) has been criticized as being insufficient. The need for digression away from top level executives in order to fully understand and dissect leadership and organizational performance has long been supported (Barnard, 1968; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Heifetz, 1994; April et al., 2000; Khurana, 2002), with increasingly complex organization dependent upon shared responsibility of multiple people (Gronn, 2003). Recently, interest has increased for expansion of organizational research, considering alternative leadership options not confined to formally appointed leaders (Fitzsimons et al., 2011). This is where shared, team and more dispersed leadership forms enter the milieu, including DL.

Before tracking influential theories considered fundamental in the development of DL, it is appropriate to consider it in relation to other, perhaps overlapping contexts. A simple Scopus search of abstracts, titles and keywords, particularly on reviews and articles of the following concepts, highlighted the following. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, DL as a concept was relatively late to the party compared to its counterparts and rivals. However, if the development rate mimics that of other concepts, it will soon catch up.



**Figure 2.1 Scopus Publication Search (adapted from Bolden, 2011)**

Much of the contemporary DL research has been carried out within the education sector yet mentioned and discussed only fleetingly in other contexts (Thorpe et al., 2011). The resurgence in interest can be attributed in part to the linkage between particular organizational benefits (Manz & Sims, 1993; Gronn, 2002a; Burke et al., 2003). With this, Gronn (2000) has become prominent within organization studies, particularly with regard to DL. Gibb's (1958) research influenced Gronn's (2002a, b) interest in the subject, with his distinctions being characterized by numerical and concertive action, which, in turn, had developmental effects on the whole concept. Gronn (2002b) strived to create a new unit of analysis allowing for leadership to be interpreted holistically (concertive action), rather than as a collation of individual constituent parts (numerical action). Gronn (2002b) reinforced his work by including three different forms of practical engagement, including spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relationships and institutionalized practices. Whilst preparing his argument, he proposed that leadership "is more appropriately understood as a fluid and emergent, rather than a fixed, phenomenon" (Gronn, 2000, p.324). These aspects together formed what he considered as conjoint agency.

Gronn (2002a) proposes three types of concertive action associated with leadership based upon previous research conducted:

1. *Differing modes of impromptu engagement in context*

Spillane et al. (2000, p.6) refer to DL as distributed practice, with tasks given to multiple people (Rogoff, 1990), which may range from budgeting and staffing, to unexpected issues. Specialised individuals with different skills come together to deal with situations, after which a team disintegrates or collaborates on longer projects. Burns (1996, p.1) explains this as an individual with “certain motivations of her own, combined with a certain self-confidence, takes the first step toward change out of a state of equilibrium” acts as a result of collaborative working, which may lead to further repetitive activity.

2. *Close relationships lead to shared understanding within an organization*

When two or more participants assume leadership responsibility, with their colleagues accepting this. Fondas & Stewart’s (1994) concept of role set helps us understand this where shared roles occur when members bridge perceived skill gap(s) or are forced by circumstance. These close relationships have been likened to marriages or friendships, however, Gabarro (1987, 1978) supposes influence rests upon the trust that is conferred to other(s).

3. *Structure and regulation govern distributed action accordingly*

Practices can be formalized to achieve alignment around shared principles, with conflict amongst team members potentially leading to restructuring (Gronn, 2002a). The phrase *primus inter pares* is used by Greenleaf (1977, p.62) and Miller (1998, p.22) to describe a group directed by the first among equals, against more hierarchical systems: “with regard to the essential work of the university – teaching students – the president is *not* the chief” but is the foundation of a “council of equals” (Greenleaf, 1977, p.77).

Despite movement toward collegiality, more recognized leadership styles still tend to see the responsible person as a heroic figure (Gronn, 2009a), acting to apportion success and blame to one individual rather than a team. The distributed concept of leadership counters this assumption toward positioned leadership practice (Spillane, 2006). Prior work by Spillane (2005) notionally highlights collaborative distribution (individuals playing one off against another), coordinated distribution (leadership practice spread over sequential leadership activities) and collective distribution (leadership practice given to two separated leaders) and adjoins with Gronn’s (2002a, b) work on DL. This work subsequently shifted the main focus of analysis from people to practice. More notably, this practice-orientated model proposed by Spillane (2006) showed DL as more than simply a dispersed take on leadership as it is not merely made up of multiple leadership, but also resulting interactions. Further, educationally situated work by Spillane and Diamond (2007) concludes that there are two associated facets to the distributed perspective of leadership, namely leader plus (1) and practice aspects (2).

1. The appreciation that leadership in schools involves more than one person, rather than the held assumption of those in formal, designated roles. It also assumes people in non-leadership positions are influencers in this way as well.

2. The practical application of leadership; “action perspective sees the reality of management as a matter of actions” (Eccles & Nohria, 1992, p.13). Linked in with leader plus, this assumption leads to individuals without formal positions being considered to take part in such pieces of work.

In tracing DL’s theoretical origins further, and attempting to supplement understanding, Spillane et al. (2004) identify distributed cognition and activity theory as founding concepts. The first combines human experience with physical, social and cultural contexts (see Hutchins, 1995; Latour, 1987; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leont’ev, 1981; Pea, 1993; Resnick, 1991), whilst the second distinguishes enabling and constraining individual, material, cultural and social factors occurring within human activity (see Brown & Duguid, 1991; Giddens, 1979, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Both are supported by Gronn (2000), with his later work (Gronn, 2008) suggesting other influences in DL’s development, summarized in Table 2.7.

Author & Concept	Explanation	Quotation
Follett (1942) Follett et al. (1973) • Reciprocal influence	Leadership can spawn from an individual with the most applicable skills in an organization.	“All the ways in which A influences B, and all the ways in which B influences A.” [It encompasses the process of how] “A influences B, and that B, made different by A’s influence, influences A, which means that A’s own activity enters into the stimulus which is causing his activity” (p.159).
Benne & Sheats (1948) • Leadership diffusion	Leadership not attached to one individual but concerned with functions of more than one person and taking different roles, depending on requirements.	“Groups may operate with various degrees of diffusion of leadership functions among group members, or of concentration of such functions in one member or a few members. Ideally, of course, the concept of leadership emphasised here is that of a multilaterally shared responsibility” (p.41).
French & Snyder (1959) • Power and influence distribution	The influence one group can have over another, on the proviso that there is a leadership function being performed.	“Usually every member has some degree of influence over others in an informal group; in other words, the leadership is widely distributed throughout the group” (p.118).
Dahl (1975) • Power and influence distribution	In dedicating a substantial section of his publication entitled “ <i>The Distribution of Influence</i> ,” Dahl (1975) made clear his beliefs surrounding the distribution of leadership in organization.	
Becker & Useem (1942) • Dual leadership	Shared interests of two parties, especially where fundamental beliefs override feelings of antipathy in pursuit of mutual betterment, borne out in political and militaristic spheres.	
Katz & Kahn (1978) • Sharing leadership	Promotes the idea that if leadership function was distributed, there is a greater chance of supported decision-making and improved quality decision making.	“All the knowledge of the world within and outside the organization is not located in the formal chain of managerial command, much less at the upper end of that chain. The sharing out of the leadership function means using more fully the resources of the organization” (p.571).
Schein (1988) • Functions of leadership	Aside from the functions leaders perform themselves, various other parts are distributed members within the group.	Effective groups allow functions to be “optimally distributed,” once these are identified within the cohort, and “any member of a given group can perform them” (p.133).

**Table 2.7 Historical Development of DL according to Gronn (2008)**

However, critics suggest that DL should seek to address more network-based arguments, meaning an:

“emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals working with an openness of boundaries... [and] the varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few” (Bennett et al., 2003, p.7).

Bennett et al.’s (2003) research produced a set of shared premises, which appeared to be common throughout their literature review on DL:

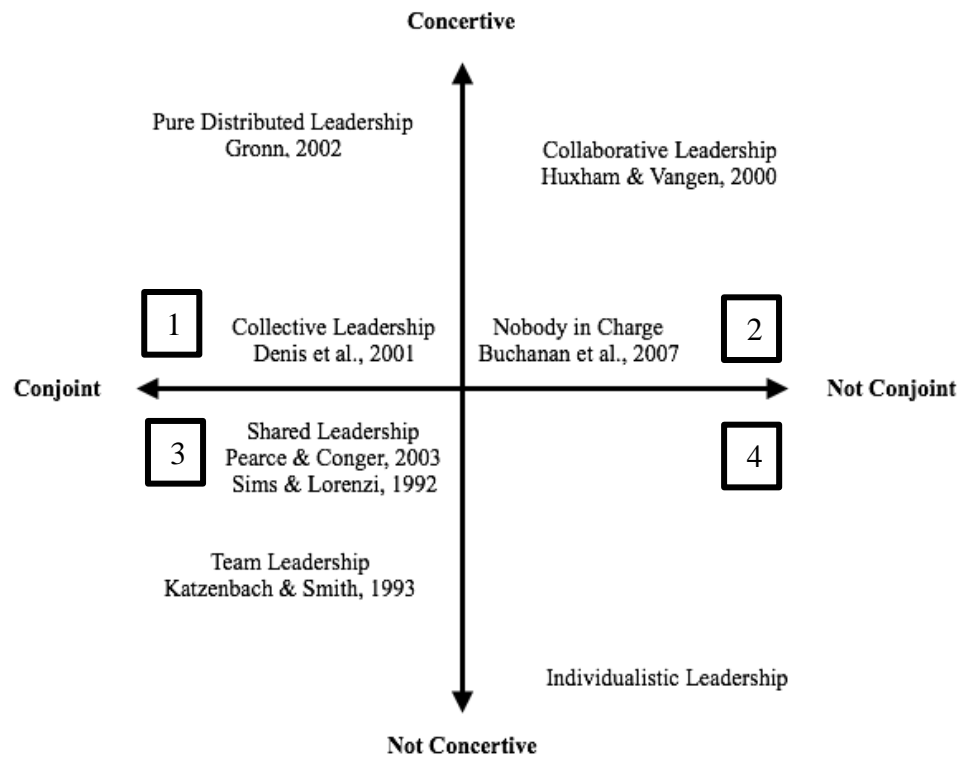
1. Leadership is an emergent property of a group of interacting individuals
2. There is openness to the boundaries of leadership
3. Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few

This network-oriented argument relies upon interconnecting individual activities and relationships forming a collective (Ross et al., 2005). Thorpe et al.’s (2008) investigations use Gronn’s (2000) foundational theorizing to develop and promote an orientation toward specialists contributing expertise to the leadership process and are thus reliant upon “collaborative and reciprocal relationships” (Thorpe et al., 2008, p.38) from their colleagues.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, DL is relatively new (Harris, 2009a, b) compared to other concepts and yet to be fully incorporated with other concepts. Currie et al. (2009) detail the theoretical development stages of the concept, originally devised by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006).

1. *Theorizing*
  - “The development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect” (Greenwood et al., 2002, p.60). Prior research and investigation have already taken place, however, the ambiguity around the definition of DL leads to continuing interpretations within society.
2. *Educating*
  - A key aspect in any new phenomenon, acting to enhance skills, understanding and subsequent application.
3. *Defining*
  - Inclusive of boundary setting for the concept, which could arguably be one of the problems associated with incorporating the DL within the current field.
4. *Changing norms*
  - Sets of ideals that society have become accustomed to in a particular setting, the altering of which can prove difficult because of imbued and habitual behaviours.





**Figure 2.2 Variants of DL (adapted from Currie & Lockett, 2011)**

Figure 2.2 illustrates concepts which have influenced DL's development, together with where they are situated in relation to other leadership theories according to Gronn's (2002b) conceptualization, with the detail below coming from Currie and Lockett (2011).

1. "We suggest that Gronn's (2002b) conception of DL, encompassing conjoint and concertive action, is located in the upper left-hand quadrant" (p.290).
2. "Bottom-up models of DL are likely to engender more synergy and ongoing reciprocal influence but may have less confidence that the direction of DL is aligned in a conjoint manner, i.e. they tend towards the top right" (p.290).
3. "Top-down driven DL models are more likely to ensure that direction is aligned (conjoint agency), but less likely to engender the widespread synergy and ongoing reciprocal influence (concertive action), i.e. they tend towards the bottom left" (p.290).
4. "We position the policy variant of transformational leadership in the bottom right quadrant, since concertive action and conjoint agency is assumed, which fails to account for the effect of context upon DL" (p.288).

The next section looks at the confusion that has resulted from the development of DL, detailing the overlap with certain other leadership assumptions. The resulting perceived interchangeability, or at least the use of the term DL, merely acts to obscure key defining theoretical differences between concepts.

### 2.3.2 Conceptual Overlap

The field of leadership is acutely vulnerable to supposed new theories or labels (Harris, 2009a), with little supporting empirical evidence only contributing to a heightened sense of confusion. Critics claim that DL is but a “new orthodoxy,” which infers underlying managerial subtleties (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2007, p.47). Further to such negativity, there are varying stances on DL and its applicability, which only adds to the sense of ambiguity relating to the concept (Torrance, 2014). Prior to this, Corrigan’s (2013) research emphasized DL as a recent victim of the episodic, fad-like tendency of “hyphenated leadership flavours” (p.68), continuing that:

“Distributed leadership has a conceptual ambiguity that has been used by proponents to further system maintenance and bureaucratic reform objectives, under the guide of a motivating new type of leadership” (p.68).

DL is proposed as a complete contrast to academics’ propensity to write about an individual heroic figure atop an organization (Harris, 2009a) and has received increased amounts of attention from academics and practitioners alike (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009a, b, c). Despite identification of a theoretical stance exemplifying multiple actors and empowering many, academic discourse has remained scant resulting from the concept being “the new kid on the block” (Gronn, 2000, p.1). However, it later had its comeuppance (Gronn, 2006), “experiencing a growth spurt that would do any teenager proud” (Leithwood et al., 2009c, p.269). Harris et al. (2007) further attributed DL as being “a convenient way of labeling all forms of shared leadership activity” (p.338). Youngs (2009) saw shared leadership as a form of DL, with the former being present at a group level and the latter being organizational level.

Referring to Spillane’s (2006) practice-centred model, Harris (2007) highlights the difference between DL and shared leadership, with DL fundamentally being about practice rather than people. Heikka et al. (2012, p.34) go on to differentiate the two concepts, with shared leadership focusing on micro-level teams, whilst “distributed leadership adopts a more macroscopic view of organization” suggesting that this form of leadership is only available to those in larger teams. Both Spillane (2006) and Harris (2008) appreciate that despite express use of the word *distributed* inferring something is delegated or dispersed amongst others, it does, in fact, describe the fluidity and emergent nature of the leadership style in an attempt at dispelling its original rigidity and unchangeable nature. The aim of this would be to understand leadership as a “dynamic organizational entity” (Harris, 2008, p.174). Woods’ (2004) assertion is a case of

balancing control and autonomy, with consideration being granted to the values and aims of the particular organization that form constituent parts of DL.

Existing literature on team leadership narrowly focuses on the perceived leader's influence, rather than encompassing the effect other team members can have on the overall direction of the group (Stewart & Manz, 1995; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Further, due to the complex makeup of contemporary organizations, there is an overriding dubiety as to whether one individual would be able to fulfil all functions expected of a leader (Day et al., 2004). This stagnation and ignorance act to hinder the development of newer concepts, such as DL, as the notion of one person taking the lead in a divine fashion is imbued in leadership practice. Commentators have expressed that leadership needs to digress from the individual to an altogether more organizational orientation (April et al., 2000; Heifetz, 1994; Khurana, 2002).

Developing from team design is the increased expectancy and reliance upon autonomous working amongst team members and how they apply skill sets (DeNisi et al., 2003). This not only leads to increased engagement, but also to a greater appetite for influencing and shaping an organization's decision-making and direction (Carson et al., 2007). Coupled with this, self-managed teams rely upon a shared appreciation that everyone works together and that the need for leadership originates from the team itself, rather than from a hierarchical standpoint (Carson et al., 2007). This type of self-governance is widespread throughout US industry (Lawler et al., 2001; Manz & Sims, 1987), implying that it is a cultural consideration that can be instilled.

Emerging theories contributing to DL include Relationship Leadership Theory (RLT), Shared Leadership Theory (SLT) and Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) (Jones et al., 2014). Hunt & Dodge (2001, p.448) purport that RLT operates as a "dynamic system" in which "leadership, environmental and organizational aspects" are considered in order to achieve desired outcomes, but whose operation is not solely reliant upon an individual or small group of "formal or informal leaders" (p.448). From an SLT perspective, leadership is said to manifest within "sub-organizational units" (Jones et al., 2014, p.604), in which various leaders appear at different times and situations throughout a given process (Conger & Pearce, 2003; Pearce, 2004). Similarly, CLT realizes the need for leaders to enact particular "strategies and behaviours" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p.299) that are easily adaptable within human networks, with emphasis being placed upon the reliance of teams, rather than individuals. It is evident that even from the relatively scant

information above, these modern conceptualizations of leadership and their application in an organization have dominant factors in common: leadership being reliant on collaborative, collegiate working at individual and group levels “within complex systems” (Jones et al., 2014, p.604) and also applicability throughout all levels within organization.

There are differing permutations and interpretations of leadership concepts, with linkages from DL to shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003) and team leadership (Bligh, 2011; Kellerman, 2008). Within the existing literature, there appears numerous instances of not only differing interpretations of DL, but conceptual overlap. These overlaps further include shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003), collaborative (Wallace, 2002), democratic (Gastil, 1997) and participative (Vroom & Yago, 1998) leadership. Equally, any leadership reference to shared, devolved or dispersed practices is automatically assumed as DL, which is not always the case. This only adds to our understanding into the complex nature of leadership within different contexts; however, a more holistic and general oversight will only be beneficial for future areas of research. Not only this, but the boundaries to which these concepts extend are somewhat obscured by these overlaps with similar leadership forms (Currie et al., 2009).

What appears as one of the most prominent and problematic conceptual confusions occurs between DL and shared leadership. One simple explanation for this is illustrated below in Table 2.8, where shared leadership has more prominence in the United States and is a more American term, with DL being utilised more in the United Kingdom.

	<b>Concept</b>	
	<i>Shared Leadership</i>	<i>Distributed Leadership</i>
United States	103 articles	35 articles
United Kingdom	9 articles	47 articles

**Table 2.8 Article Popularity (adapted from Bolden, 2011)**

However, Ulhøi & Müller’s (2014) semantic dissection offers clarity when considering the two concepts. Sharing involves two or more people doing some of a particular activity, whilst distributing infers giving something to, or spreading amongst, others, which in this instance is leadership responsibility. Yet prior to this, Spillane (2005) argues that none of the aforementioned concepts, inclusive of shared leadership, are synonyms for DL. He goes on to espouse that, dependent on the context, distribution can lead the way to shared leadership. There is little doubt that DL and shared leadership are certainly very close to one another, however, in summary of their differences, shared

leadership offers an environment encouraging participation of individuals and situations, whilst DL is the fundamental act of distributing leadership actions (Malloy, 2012).

The next section assesses contemporary conceptualizations of DL, before relating it to this study. Further sections will detail the environments within which the study is based and how DL contributes to our overall understanding of how leadership is enacted.

### **2.3.3 Distributed Leadership and its modern contextualization**

Although people think they know what DL means, there is little supporting evidence of an ideal type (Bolden et al., 2008; Gosling et al., 2009). With the evolution of leadership, management and organization, together with the recognition that leaders are not omniscient and require assistance from others (Sadler, 2001; Ancona et al., 2007), Gronn (2002a) acted to reframe previous leadership theory with his DL interpretation. His focus was on a holistic conceptualization, rather than of constituent parts, with his research proposing the dispersed nature of DL as a defining aspect making it different from individual centric leadership.

According to O'Toole et al. (2002, p.65), "cultural conditioning" has led to the mindset that "leadership is always singular," rather than shared and collegiate. Despite this, and with renewed considerations including thinking, acting and mutual trust being pivotal (Graetz, 2000), Spillane et al. (2004) contested that discourse, physical environment and context remain underappreciated. Buchanan et al. (2007) support the idea that charge should not be conferred upon an individual and that those who apply leadership capacity in this context are "numerous, transient [and] migratory" (p.1085), expressing the collegiate, yet still dispersed nature of DL. Such team interaction leads to a common purpose, increased autonomy and patterns of discourse emerging (Scribner et al., 2007). Each of these constituent aspects are "pooled, sequential or reciprocal and decisions emerge from collaborative dialogues between individuals, engaged in mutually dependent activities" (Scribner et al., 2007, p.70), meaning they cannot operate in isolation and rely upon one another.

Gronn (2002a) cites an anonymous critic of DL who underlines the concept's importance and applicability yet confers there is a severe dearth of its exploration, analysis and understanding. This supposition leads to further concerns, outlined by Gunter and Ribbins (2003, p132):

“While distributed leadership tends to be seen as normatively a good thing, it has also been contested...most notably because of the complexities of who does the distribution and who is in receipt of distribution.”

With mutuality in mind, rather than simply highlighting the need for more leaders, DL promotes equal redistribution of power and authority throughout an organization (Currie et al., 2009) and challenges hierarchy and bureaucracy (Bolden et al., 2009), facilitating concertive action and multiple engagement amongst system contributors (Gronn, 2000, 2002a, b). Bennett et al. (2003) had different outcomes, with overarching themes from their research of conceptualization and application. These were sub-divided into three sub-themes of leadership as *emergent*, *open* and encompassing a *variety of expertise*. Fundamental conclusions were drawn including a lack of an accepted definition of DL, thus acting as a hindrance from the start of the research, and also the lack of practical evidence in the application of DL.

## ***2.4 Distributed Leadership in the Context of This Study***

Academia and healthcare have attracted attention due to DL being used within these organizations. Yet, little research has been conducted to verify whether individuals working within these settings subscribe to being part of the same, singular organization. Organizational members agree there is a leadership function to be performed, despite conflicting definitions (see Table 2.2). However, how can this be performed if members do not agree to which organization they are accountable? Further research was carried out within these settings due to the availability of existing literature, whilst adopting local government as a further context.

Individuals who inhabit academia and healthcare are bright, capable people, where the boundaries of their profession and individual identity are less blurred than local government councillors, who occupy an interesting, complicated hybrid of professional, identity and organizational membership. In academia and healthcare, despite the ambiguity of professional allegiances, there is less confusion than in local government. An academic may be part of the academy and have a salary paid by a university, for example, and a consultant may be a member of the GMC or GDC and have their salary paid by a local health board. However, a local government official receives a nominal stipend, yet is legally a member of particular committees with associated responsibilities. Therefore, as well as developing settings that have already been investigated within the

literature, it was deemed appropriate to further dissect another multi-identity, low-authority setting to substantiate the findings from this research.

The majority of research on DL has been largely developed in secondary education (Spillane et al., 2003, 2004; Harris, 2007; Robinson, 2008; Currie et al., 2009) and healthcare (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Fitzgerald et al., 2013). It was deemed appropriate to further this research as they are relatively commonplace in the DL milieu, whilst at the same time considering a setting which had received little attention. Currie et al. (2009) considered DL in public service organizations as a leadership concept to appeal to “multiple goals, less pronounced managerial authority and presence of powerful professional groups” (p.1735).

Research surrounding DL in UK organizations has been applied in the education sector, (Jones et al., 2012), yet particular attention has also been paid to the UK healthcare sector and the effectiveness of its leadership after failings in health boards, bringing into question whether current provision is fit for purpose. In the public sector where there are more objectives and associated power is spread out, discourse has shown an inclination to spread leadership across the organization (Hartley & Allison, 2000). Further, DL has been introduced as contributing to leadership practice in an increasingly complicated, unpredictable global environment (Grint, 2008). This section now details DL in context.

#### **2.4.1 Academia and Education**

In UK Higher Education (HE), major reform of funding streams, regulatory requirements and student demand has led to increased requirement for good leadership (HEFCE, 2004). Maintenance and development of sustainable leadership is integral in HE institutions; however, managerialism, marketization, audit, corporatization (Szekeres, 2004) and remaining globally competitive (Jones et al., 2012) contribute to the increasingly unstable, unpredictable environment universities occupy. These “waves of managerialism” (Lumby, 2003, p.283) have resulted in a reduction in academic autonomy, an increase in bitterness, and a subsequent leadership crisis within the sector (Coates et al., 2009). Prior research shows that there are inclinations toward collegiality and academic freedom entrenched in HE institutions (Middlehurst, 1993; Deem, 2001), with a resulting reluctance to accept managerialism or top-down leadership (Bolden, 2007). Consequently, universities are striving to navigate this environmental uncertainty by employing and embracing DL as a viable leadership concept (LFHE, 2004) to create

a climate within which all relationships and interactions have leadership influence, rather than simply being bestowed on individuals in formal positions.

Educational leadership has received great attention involving DL over the past 25 years (Bolden, 2011; Bush, 2013; Elmore, 2003; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2007; Hartley, 2007, 2009). Spillane et al. (2001, p.9) building upon the DL characteristics of Bennett et al. (2003), highlights that DL should be thought of as a “lens” or “framework for thinking about and analysing leadership.” Spillane et al. (2001) go on to apply a collective leadership concept in practice, with findings showing that leadership should be bestowed on all stakeholders with an interest in an educational setting, including parents and teachers. He acknowledges that, in a practical setting, the existence of such interactions of stakeholders is influenced by context. His overall conclusions err toward the inference that anyone can be, but does not wish to be, the leader. Elements of function, subject matter and context have a bearing on the leadership being performed. As highlighted above, there is substantial overlap between leadership concepts, and work carried out by Spillane (2006) and Woods (2004) further claim that DL could be split into two styles: democratic and autocratic. A longitudinal study showed that those in formal positions play a pivotal role in the promotion of less formal leadership within an organization (Spillane & Healey, 2010; Spillane et al., 2003, 2007).

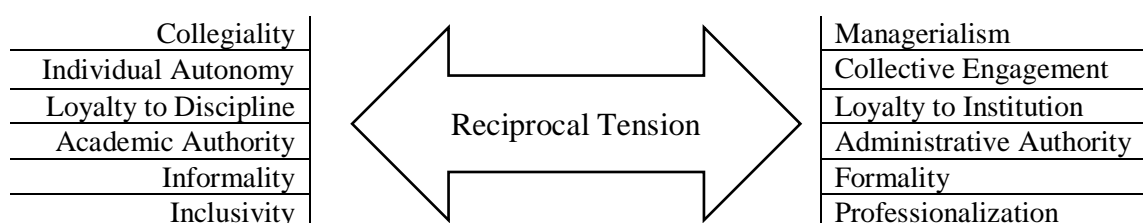
Specifically, research interest in the HE sector concludes leadership within universities is broadly distributed (Middlehurst, 1993; Knight & Trowler, 2001), or should be, across an establishment (Shattock, 2003). The application of DL in an educational setting has attracted more interest of late, with Hatcher (2005) supposing wider engagement results in increased effectiveness and the skills of a greater number of people are important to achieve greater leadership success. The exposure of DL within education allows all players to take on leadership roles (MacBeath et al., 2004), whilst at the same time applying boundaries to equally distribute leadership and not favour an individual, ensuring no preclusion (Bennett et al., 2003). Developing Bennett et al.’s (2003) main aspects of DL in HE, interacting university parties include academics, professional service staff, students, communities, university executive and regulatory bodies. They contribute to the overall direction of the institution, albeit with differing scopes of influence. Despite this renewed interest, there remains a lack of attention and understanding of leadership distribution and associated practices (Bolden et al., 2009).



Bolden et al.'s (2009) study assesses the personal experiences of those in universities subject to DL, how this style was maintained and how it aligned with other operational functions. Broadly speaking, organizational players agreed that DL was necessary across HE, supporting that such a diverse, complex institution could not be led by a small group of people in formal roles. The classifications identified were similar to those of MacBeath et al. (2004), whose research was carried out in schools (adapted from Bolden et al., 2009, p262):

- *Formal*: devolution of functional authority to schools and departments
- *Pragmatic*: negotiating division of responsibilities between roles such as VC and DVC or HoS (often with one becoming external facing and the other internal facing).
- *Strategic*: appointment of people from outside the university to bring new skills and knowledge (particularly appointing professional managers from outside sector).
- *Incremental*: continual opportunities for experience and responsibility, for example being part of committees, leading or deputizing on courses, programmes and projects
- *Opportunistic*: individuals taking additional responsibilities in the university environment; leading projects, publication boards, liaising with external organizations
- *Cultural*: leadership assumed and shared naturally, for example in the case of a research funding application

The research continues by contesting authors' (Knight & Trowler, 2001; Lumby, 2003; Harris, 2003) arguments that delegation and devolution should remain removed from DL, as these imply top-down over bottom-up influence, prohibiting particular layers of people from contributing to the process. However, the research found these were the most commonly referenced channels through which leadership was deferred through the university. Developing MacBeath et al.'s (2004) findings, it was found that academics who assume leadership roles are likely to be research-orientated. There are various roles research academics could take, driven by academic credibility and subject passion. Research found one reason for this inclination to lead resulted from social identity (Haslam, 2004). The ability to take on additional responsibility was seen as feasible without causing tension between their two roles: academic (subject specific) and leader (organizational expectations). Deans and Heads of Schools were amongst interviewees whose allegiances were challenged between their academic discipline and the university. The research concludes by reporting that despite the relatively blurred, numerous interpretations of DL within HE, it was generally accepted. However, there is uncertainty and apprehension across universities, manifesting in a number of ways summarized in Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3 Reciprocal Tension (adapted from Bolden et al., 2009, p.270)**

Individual institutions have tailored methods to deal with the above problems, however, the research highlights that these are largely influenced by those who hold leadership positions at the time. Leaders will form teams around them to suit their needs and aspirations, in line with institutional goals. The report closed by stipulating that, within current discourse and research, DL offered relatively little more benefit than any other form of leadership. There remains the appreciation of the need for leadership within HE institutions.

In summary, current research does not adequately provide a suitable approach for effective leadership in higher education in the UK, with the pervasive need to “create an environment or context for academics and others to fulfil their potential and interest in their work” (Bryman, 2009, p.66). Bolden et al.’s (2009) research highlights tensions within HE in respect of the leadership being enacted, something which should be granted further investigation.

## **2.4.2 Healthcare**

Leadership within healthcare is broadly accepted (Martin & Learmonth, 2012), with Gilmartin and D’Aunno (2007, p.408) proposing that “leadership is positively and significantly associated with individual and group satisfaction, retention and performance.” The NHS prefers to use so-called *shared leadership* rather than DL, with leadership responsibility being divided amongst those clinically and non-clinically trained, who are expected to work in harmony to achieve the best outcomes for the service users. However, shared working between medical leaders and clinicians has been found to be a constituent aspect of healthcare delivery (Pettigrew et al., 1992), with extremely difficult medical and leadership decisions being made in a time of heightened austerity and performance assessment. This structure was introduced as an agenda termed as oiling the wheels (Harrison & Pollitt, 1994). Such relationships have been assessed to date (see Armstrong, 2002), with results proving that there is increased disaffection between clinicians and non-clinical counterparts (Davies & Harrison, 2003), with a perceived reduction in clinical autonomy and a shift toward stricter governance within leadership

and management (Kirkpatrick et al., 2009; Learnmonth, 2003). Issues between hospital leaders and clinicians are not only prevalent in the UK health service, but also in the USA (Davies & Harrison, 2003; Smith, 2003). Research into this found that clinicians often distanced themselves from various forms of leadership at both operational and board level (Ackroyd, 1996), which led to both sets of players aligning to different ideas (Jönsson, 1998).

Despite this complex organizational composition, effective leadership has become internationally recognized as being at the heart of performance improvement within healthcare (Hennessey, 1998; Kakabadse et al., 2003). To support this improvement drive, there has been a tendency to include doctors more with leadership and management practice (Davies & Harrison, 2003; Ferlie et al., 1996; Schneller et al., 1997) and alongside transformational leadership (Behn, 1998; Bellone & Goerl, 1992; Eggers & O’Leary, 1995; Hennessey, 1998), DL forms two models favoured by healthcare policy makers (Buchanan et al., 2007). This is contrary to the historic framework, where many healthcare organizations are purported to subscribe to a bureaucratic paradigm (Mintzberg, 1979a). In context, a group of staff exert significant influence over the service delivery and self-regulate accordingly, attracting little leadership interference from outwith this group (Friedson, 1994; Hebdon & Kirkpatrick, 2005; Wilding, 1982). This group is usually led by an elected individual, considered as the first among equals [*primus inter pares*], but with collegiality being the grounding for decision-making (Kirkpatrick, 1999; Sheaff et al., 2004). Yet, research carried out by Fitzgerald et al. (2013) supports change and performance improvement as only substantiated if effective leadership occurs throughout the organization, promoting the multi-tiered nature of DL.

However, these comments are made on the premise that organizational members appreciate there is a leadership function to be performed, and they are all part of the same organization. Historically, there has been a tendency for clinicians to detach themselves from all levels of management (Davies & Harrison, 2003). However, clinicians are employing and displaying Janusian thinking, meaning the effective compounding of antagonistic ideas (McCaskey, 1988). Whereas previously these realms were blurred from one another (one-way windows), both are now easily distinguishable, with increased communicative capacity and ability. In line with the research being carried out, Llewellyn (2001) encapsulates the “two-way window” concept, coined by Power (1996, p.12), to shroud the dual boundary occupation that clinical directors have in their medical and leadership roles. In this sense, it promotes a greater acceptance of being a clinician

and a leader concurrently. As highlighted by Llewellyn (2001), this glazing metaphor is apt, as clinicians fulfil an extremely public, front-facing role, thus making them very receptive to “the external and how they [clinicians] stand in relation to it” (Townley, 1995, p.275). More recently, Martin et al. (2015) found that the defining characteristic of empowerment of DL was not being actioned, leading to further misalignment between clinical and non-clinical leaders, not to mention contributing to the already rife disaffection from one another. This study aims to address the ambiguity within healthcare in organizational membership and the idea that individuals do not see themselves as part of one organization.

### **2.4.3 Local Government**

A changing political landscape in the UK over the past twenty years has highlighted the need for more visible leadership in local government (Game, 2002), founded by the discovery that there was “a serious structural flaw in British local government,” leading to “a headless state” (Regan, 1980, p.8). This coupled with demand for increased community decision making, along with rising expectations (Hambleton, 1998) and demand in a time of austerity (Okubo, 2010), has led to local government being faced with new challenges. With a striking resemblance to the education sector, John (2001, p.152) notes the factors affecting local government:

“Leadership is crucial to local governance. The politics of decentralization, networks, participation, partnerships, bureaucratic reform, rapid change policy change and central intervention need powerful, but creative figures to give a direction to local policy-making.”

Hambleton & Sweeting (2002) propose three central, equal influences in local government leadership. Each of these are a given when agreeing to leadership in local government; however, context will play an important role in how leaders facilitate challenges. They also highlight the contextual nature of local leadership and the constricting environmental factors:

- *Policy environment:* Rules from central government and economic forces influence scope of local leadership. Local leaders must carry out tasks in their constituency, with innovation and creativity dependent on locality.
- *Institutional arrangements:* The makeup of the decision-making process will influence leadership effectiveness. This can be in a supportive or prohibitive fashion. The more complex the setting, the harder leaders will need to work to overcome obstacles.
- *Relationship with followers:* The level of interplay with supporters impacts on the abilities of the leader in inter-organizational discussions and exchanges. This is not only constituents, but also other political parties.

The third point is pivotal to this study. Leaders must remain reflexively cognizant of their own credibility and the needs of their constituents. Those who question the commitment of followers will fail, and those who are over confident in their abilities and complacent will fail. From this, candidates must remain comprehensive in their leadership and alert to the needs of their constituents. Political leaders must also work effectively for the greater good of their community with other parties, whose ideals may differ. However, as figureheads, leaders are required to convert these differences into consensus, action and change.

## 2.5 Summary

This review has highlighted discontent in applying DL within organization, together with a fundamental problem in arriving at a concise, acceptable conceptual definition (Bolden et al., 2008). Leadership is understood as originating from the team itself; however, researchers remain convinced of the reliance upon one individual to influence. A lack of formal authority will lead to power struggles and conflict arising within teams (Barry, 1991). Viewing one person as a heroic figure (Gronn, 2009a) is somewhat gendered and outdated, and contrasts with the concept of everyone leading (Harris, 2007), coupled with the dubiety surrounding whether or not one person could fulfil the role of the modern leader (Day et al., 2004). DL offers different levels of hierarchy the opportunity to lead and make decisions (Grint, 2011; Gronn, 2009b) locally. DL is identified as a viable player in the leadership milieu, however, sufficient empirical evidence lacks to substantiate its relevance in the academic, healthcare, and local government sectors. Table 2.9 summarizes the themes emerging from the literature.

Theme	Explanation	Reference
Accessibility	Leadership should not be confined to those who have a title and should consider mutuality, with all levels of hierarchy able to exert leadership and influence decisions.	Harris, 2007 Grint, 2011 Gronn, 2009b
Action and Task Focused	Perceiving leadership as a combination of performance of tasks, distribution and as a matter of actions.	Robinson, 2008 Spillane, 2008
Blurred Lines	Leadership boundaries are unclear, emergent and open.	Bennett et al., 2003
Conflict	Power struggles and conflict manifest in teams, with contention arising from interaction of individuals.	Barry, 1991 Spillane, 2006
Heroic Figure	Seeing the ultimate role of leadership as being fulfilled by one responsible person as a heroic figure.	Gronn, 2009a Lumby, 2013
Individual Expertise	Various degrees and variety of expertise distributed across many people, questioning if one person can actually lead.	Bennett et al., 2003 Day et al, 2004

Multiple Leaders	Leadership involves interacting with others, with subsequent redistribution of power and authority and everyone performing a leadership function.	Spillane et al., 2004
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**Table 2.9 Emergent Themes from DL Literature**

A commonality is that players appreciate leadership is enacted within organization; however, there remains a gap in understanding whether that is an individual, group, or a combination. This contention is further problematized with increased disaffection between clinicians and clinical leaders (Davies & Harrison, 2003), a reduction in academic autonomy (Coates et al., 2009) and reluctance to accept managerialism (Bolden et al., 2003) in academia.

In low-authority, individuals are amongst the most skilled professionals and demand individual autonomy. This issue is exacerbated by the notion that not everyone in that organization is, in fact, solely ascribing to it. In academia, a specialist sees themselves as accountable to both the academy and the institution paying their salary. In healthcare, clinicians are responsible for their conduct to the GMC or GDC yet are employed by a health board. Similarly, within local government, political leaders are working with their party and opposition colleagues, professional staff and constituents. These affiliations are notwithstanding professional accredited body memberships and other additional roles that leaders choose to fulfil on a paid or voluntary basis. In Table 2.9 the themes of *Blurred Lines* and *Multiple Leaders* align well with this notion of ascribing to more than one organization, with a lack of clear understanding of who is actually in charge of an individual. There is a distinct lack of research dedicated to multiple organizational memberships and how leaders can influence their colleagues. Taking all this into consideration, it is surmised that DL is the unifying theme in a pluri-vocal sense of organization, rather than being the disconnecting factor. DL is the theoretical concept which has the potential to overcome distributed organizational membership in which you empower a local leader to enact what they see as appropriate strategies within their organization. They can make decisions based on the demands they face, as well as other organizational memberships, whether they are professional or otherwise.

As a result, this research will use DL as a framework applied to academia, healthcare and local government, with the aim of assessing the relationship between leaders and followers within low-authority, and how this dualistic organizational relationship works. The project will look at whether parties subscribe to the same organization and, if not, whether there is increased dubiety as to whether they can, in fact, be led. Table 2.10 highlights the relatively scant attention DL has received over the past decade in top

ranking journals compared to overall leadership exploration. The apparent inconsistencies between parties highlighted in the literature will be assessed to find whether there is a common understanding of leadership as a pivotal aspect of the particular organization and who, in fact, does the leading.

ABS (2015) Category	ABS Rank	Name of Journal 2006 onwards	Leadership Results <i>Business Source Premier</i>	Distributed Leadership Results <i>Business Source Premier</i>
General Management, Ethics and Social Responsibility	3	Academy of Management Perspectives	73	
		California Management Review	36	1
		European Management Review	1	
		Harvard Business Review	537	
		International Journal of Management Reviews	16	6
		Journal of Business Ethics	439	
		Journal of Business Research	90	
		Journal of Management Enquiry	1	
		MIT Sloan Management Review	77	
	4	British Journal of Management	48	1
		Business Ethics Quarterly	25	
		Journal of Management Studies	42	1
	4*	Academy of Management Journal	85	1
		Academy of Management Review	42	
		Administrative Science Quarterly	18	
		Journal of Management	75	
Management Development and Education	3	Management Learning	80	1
Organization Studies	3	Organization	25	
		Research in Organizational Behavior	8	
	4	Human Relations	101	4
		Leadership Quarterly	821	13
		Organizational Research Methods	12	
	4*	Organization Science	41	
	3	Journal of European Public Policy	23	
		Milbank Quarterly	15	1
		Public Management Review	42	
	4	Public Administration Review	131	1
Sector Studies	3	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	16	
	4	Journal of Service Research	8	
		Journal of Travel Research	1	
Social Sciences	3	Journal of Development Studies	7	
		Kyklos	4	
		New Political Economy	6	
		Public Opinion Quarterly	7	
		Review of International Political Economy	9	



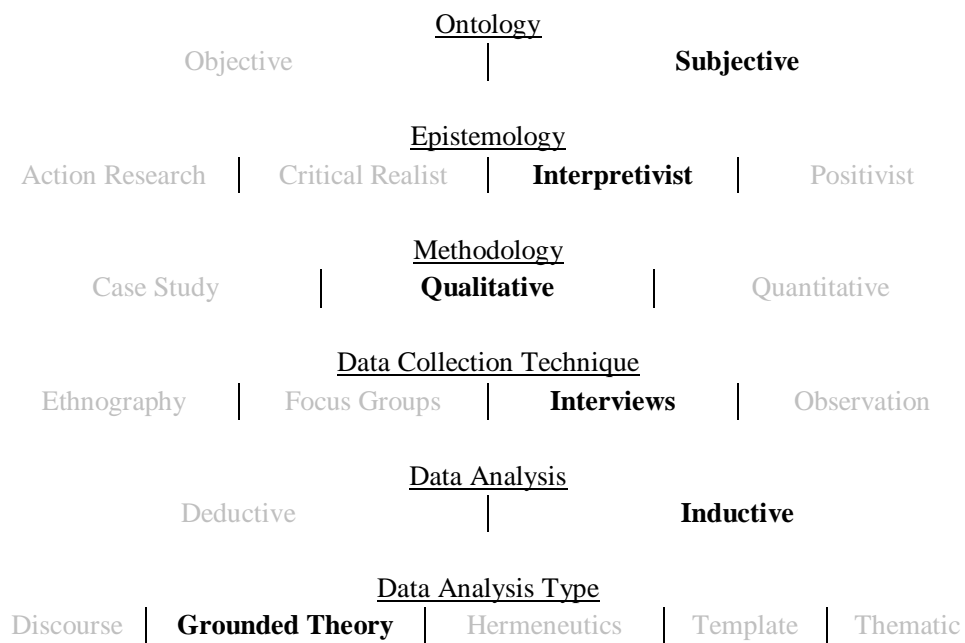
		Social Forces	9	
		World Development	20	
	4	Journal of Economic Geography	1	
		Sociology	1	
	4*	American Journal of Sociology	9	
		American Sociological Review	14	
Strategy	3	Global Strategy Journal	1	
		Long Range Planning	23	
		Strategic Organization	5	
	4*	Strategic Management Journal	55	
	TOTALS		3100	30

**Table 2.10 Leadership Journal Result**

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents discussions of the research paradigm and techniques used in the data collection and analyses processes. There is a need to ensure that the pieces combining to form the overall research project cohere, otherwise the lack of interplay could result in an inconclusive ending. According to O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015), as the process is contextual, there is no prescribed or correct way to carry out a piece of research. However, there are historic conventions, with associated sets of common methods and processes. Perpetual changes in technology and society lead to intense ambiguity when choosing methodological options for management research (Pettigrew, 1990), therefore the onus is on the researcher to ensure this is carried out appropriately.



**Figure 3.1 Methods Map (adapted from O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015)**

Figure 3.1 illustrates the aspects considered in this chapter and preferred options that have been chosen, together with highlighting alternatives. These combine to form the project’s methodology. This chapter opens with an overview of research philosophy and subsequently favours the interpretivist paradigm, with consideration given to alternative viewpoints and reasoning for their dismissal. It continues with a brief analysis of methodological options, data collection and sourcing options, culminating in the ethical considerations prevalent for this particular study. Before concluding, the data collection method will be analysed in detail.

### **3.2 *Paradigm***

Organizational research has suffered from disengagement amongst knowledge producers and users, something not limited to these disciplines (Glaser et al., 1983; Leontif, 1982; Rogers, 1995). In organization, practitioners are said to struggle when making use of academic output:

“As our research methods and techniques have become more sophisticated, they have also become increasingly less useful for solving the practical problems that members of organizations face” (Susman & Evered, 1978, p.682).

Academics even self-vilify and deprecate, appreciating that they inhabit a recursive system whereby they are informing themselves of what they already know, and sometimes do not consider how little their work contributes to authentic, novel situations and contexts:

“Each August, we [academics] come to talk with each other; during the rest of the year we read each other’s papers in our journals and write our own papers so that we may, in turn, have an audience the following August: an incestuous, closed loop” (Hambrick, 1994, p.13).

A relevance gap (Starkey & Madan, 2001) between research and practice has spawned from attempts to make the field more scientifically positioned (Gordon & Howell, 1959; Pierson, 1959), with Kieser & Leiner (2009) claiming that both parties occupy different, incommensurate social systems. It is argued that there is a substantial divide between academics and practitioners, theory and practice, rigour and relevance, or other idioms (Austin & Bartunek, 2012; Bansal et al., 2012; Briner et al., 2009; Cascio & Aguinis, 2008; Dipboye, 2007; Empson, 2013; Rynes et al., 2007). Bansal et al. (2012, p.73) highlight that management research output “utterly fails to resonate with management practice,” whilst Ghoshal (2005) previously expressed reservations of theory on practice as potentially damaging. However, in contesting this, some voice concern that its magnitude is growing, rather than shrinking (Markides, 2007; Tsui, 2013). An emphasis on ensuring theoretical and methodical rigour and utility in context throughout organizational research has been documented, especially in medical (Denis & Langley, 2002) and management (Rogers, 1995; Tranfield et al., 2003) disciplines, and more recently in considering the future state of management research (Birkinshaw et al., 2014).

In an attempt to mitigate against these potential pitfalls, research design should be focused around engaging organizations to identify and find solutions of high practical significance (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011) to real world issues (van de Ven, 2007). In doing so, this

seeks to combat the risk of irrelevance, with management and organizational research accurately documenting all forms of observable processes and predicting future processes and behaviours, which govern contemporary organization. A constituent aspect of this is narrowing the involvement gap between academics and practitioners to ensure applicable, useful policy and practice outcomes (Trist & Bamforth, 1951; Hodgkinson & Starkey, 2011). To achieve this, theory and method must work in tandem to facilitate such a task and it is the duty of the researcher to choose from the selection of possibilities. It is all too common that these integral aspects of research are treated in isolation and contention occurs during their interplay, whereas they should be working in harmony to produce robust, plausible outputs. This is not to say that independent consideration is forbidden or wrong. Moreover, an appreciation of the closeness will develop through the research process between two entities and the requirement for theory and methods to work together. Therefore, it is up to the researcher to set themselves amongst a shared, widely appreciated set of assumptions, as denoted by Grégoire et al.'s (2006) paradigm.

However, motivation toward usable research outputs can be mired by the researcher, with their own unique opinions and beliefs, combined with entities as fluid, unpredictable and infinitely contextual as organizations (Astley & Van de Ven, 1983; Fabian, 2000). Again, it is down to the researcher to pragmatically approach the testing of theories in spite of hindrances that will undoubtedly be encountered during the process (Miller & Tsang, 2010). It is in our nature to preconceive before we understand or think we understand the full picture, thus not only inducing an increased level of bias into a research situation, but also a tendency toward tarnishing and producing false results. As Sarton (1929, p.88) historically notes, “the most difficult thing in science, as in other fields, is to shake off accepted views,” meaning that society has shaped what it deems as the norm, something which is difficult to ignore in research. For research to be as bias-free as possible, the researcher must attempt to remove themselves far enough so that previous experiences and cultural expectations will not have a detrimental, or too influential an effect on subsequent outcomes and recommendations.

In an attempt to maintain alignment throughout the lifespan of a project, researchers subscribe to a theoretical paradigm corresponding to their research orientation, both ontologically and epistemologically. Theoretical paradigms are renowned for their complexity, with meaning and definition historically having been the source of great scrutiny and interest amongst researchers (Dubin, 1969; Kuhn, 1970). A paradigm challenges the questioning of appropriate theories and methods of a particular

phenomenon (Freeman and Lorange, 1985) and has since been defined as the “acceptable beliefs and assumptions for generating theories about phenomena” (Fabian, 2000, p.351). Prior to this, Kuhn (1971) advised that upon selecting a suitable philosophical paradigm, the researcher should, as far as possible, remain within the confines of that paradigm in order to ensure robustness and consistency throughout. A paradigm is made up of an ontology (nature of being and reality) and an epistemology (nature of knowledge), both of which will now be considered and chosen.

### **3.2.1 Ontology**

The first hurdle to overcome in research is where it sits in reality, known as a project’s ontology. It is often assumed that there is only one reality in which humans live. O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) describe ontology as “the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being and of reality” (p.54). Ontology questions identity and Nozick (1981) previously contested identity from one point in time to another and, further, questioned the constituent parts of this so-called identity.

This research subsists within the subjective ontology as it relies upon, and is substantiated by training, experience and interactions professionals have with colleagues. A subjective ontology assumes that reality is moulded from our perceptions and experiences, verifying that, in this type of research, the researcher and research subject(s) are inseparable. Within particular contexts, this leads to ultimate knowledge creation (Goldman, 1999). As is the case with most aspects of a social science research, knowledge and value are only created and applicable within the social context being analysed and are mostly non-transferrable. Such stories gleaned from interactions with academics, clinicians and politicians and shared in an interview create a milieu in which understanding and meaning can be processed to reach a logical outcome. This also helps in adding value and knowledge to the research setting (Marsh & Furlong, 2002).

However, consideration must be given to the individual carrying out the research, as they remain pivotal to the process. They will be interpreting and translating the data into logical explanations and outcomes. As with any piece of work, one person’s view will differ from another; however, in support of this, interpretivism apportions value on experience (Gadamer et al., 2004). One piece of research will make suggestions for further enquiry, with new viewpoints, analytical processes and outcomes. This is not to say that one piece of research is wrong. It is merely viewed through a different lens by another individual at a given point in time. The researcher cannot be removed from the

investigation thus the observer and the research subject are inseparable and must be considered in tandem. Historically, Jünger (1929) highlights experience as going further than the object, with Simmel (1950) supporting this:

“The objective not only becomes an image and idea, as in knowing, but an element in the life process itself” (p.151).

This, together with theoretical backing and evidence from interviews can lead to knowledge development and additional value creation in the research setting.

### **3.2.2 Epistemology**

To complete a research paradigm, the chosen ontological perspective needs to be accompanied by an epistemological stance. Interpretivism is an epistemology that allows understanding of socially constructed reality through interpretations, language and routines (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen, 1999), often associated with individual understanding (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Modern contextualization and interpretation are often based on Husserl’s (1936 [1970]) life-world phenomenon in that what is recognized in the world is purely based on experiences we have had before. For this research, an interpretivist epistemology has been adopted as it is compatible with a subjective life-world perspective of ontology (Leitch et al., 2010) and because it identifies a difference between natural and human sciences. Interpretivist assumptions reinforce how the world and everything in it is socially constructed and that understanding, significance and meaning are not merely created by each individual, but more in harmony with other human beings as a society. Following Crotty’s (1998, p.67) understanding, interpretivism “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social-life world.”

However, Dilthey (1883) previously argued that certain concepts are not sufficient and that natural and social realities differ. This position requires alternative investigation methods, with the notion having subsequently been rejected (Windelband, 1921; Rickert, 1915 [1929]). In rejecting, Windelband (1921) proposes that nature strives for consistencies, regularities or what is *nomothetic* (law – *nomos*), whilst it is the individual, or *idiographic* (*idios*), who is of concern in human investigations. In a similar manner, Rickert (1915[1929]) likens a method of generalizing for natural sciences and an individualizing method for human and social sciences. Weber (1924) observes that social sciences act to comprehend social phenomena in human experiences, and that previous findings in natural science research cannot be transferred for social examination. Weber

(1924), in rejecting positivism advocates that human and social sciences need a more explicative (*Erklären*) approach, more commonly found in natural sciences, rather than an interpretative, understanding (*Verstehen*) approach. With these contentious viewpoints considered, it can be summarized that the natural sciences aim to create general laws, whilst social sciences “isolate individual phenomena in order to trace their unique development” (Crotty, 1998, p.68).

More recently, Prasad and Prasad (2002) assert that interpretivist research is based around understanding of local meaning, together with discourse or words, which evoke particularly symbolic meaning. Prasad and Prasad (2002) further observe what could be surmised as the minutiae of personal interaction, discourse and culture, with the macro perspective of organization, structures and processes being left to other paradigms. The potential value of this research depends upon the richness of the data collected, with relevant stories and experiences being relayed in context to inform the study. As with any research project, a justified theoretical contribution is pivotal, whose success relies heavily upon the quality of the narratives hidden in the data (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2016; Pollock & Bono, 2013; Van Maanen, 1995). Black’s (2006, p.320) thought process claims that interpretivism “thrives on subtlety,” adding that “meaning is buried within superficially inconsequential inflections of voice, body language or situational details.” Yet Cornelissen (2016) proposes that the production and richness of personal accounts in management scholarship are in jeopardy, blaming such digression on the attempt to imitate alternative quantitative methods (Bluhm et al., 2011; Gioia et al., 2012). Without these useful interactions influenced by prior events, there would be no foundation behind interviewee assertions. These suppositions should not, however, act to dismiss the importance of a more holistic organizational perspective in research.

For a holistic understanding, it is imperative to encompass everything, including processes of leadership, management and the underlying organizational operations. Research conducted in a similar setting, which simply takes a temporal snapshot of an organization, is going to be of little relevance. This can be due to employee viewpoints being shaped by prior experiences, which has the potential to be laden with bias from bad past events. Mintzberg (1979b) asserts that instead of focusing on the individual function of an organization, together with its human resource capability, researchers have historically been guilty of dividing organizations into unrelated categories, to which they must conform. This research aims at assessing how organizations actually function as it happens in the field. This is propounded by Orlans

(1975, p109), who likens social scientists to morticians rather than the detectives we should be, who are forcing organizations into irrelevant categories, rather than taking an overall perspective and dissecting to find out more about their composition.

As mentioned, human beings have opinions, biases and beliefs which have been formed as a result of their social settings and different lived experiences. Together with this, they provide an incredibly useful insight into daily life through stories and experiences, thus allowing the researcher to interpret these through research. This ability limits the propensity for generalization within qualitative research in the interpretivist paradigm, allowing the data “to provide insights, rich details and thick descriptions” (Jack & Anderson, 2002, p.473). However, as Burrell and Morgan (1979) previously summarized, it is essential to keep the subject at the forefront of an interpretive research project to achieve these outcomes:

“It [interpretivist paradigm] seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action” (p.28).

More recently, engagement between researchers and practitioners within the management disciplines has been found to be broadly lacking (Hughes et al., 2011), exacerbated by great variations in management knowledge (Pfeffer, 1993; Starbuck, 2006; Whitley, 1984, 2000). Further, and more concentrated on the concept of leadership theory development:

“Eternal and robust truths are almost impossible to come by in a complex, situation-specific and dynamic area like leadership. All we can do is to expand the range of ways we can interpret leadership and hopefully provide some useful and engaging insights that we did not have before” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, p.4).

This does not question the correctness of their views and, indeed, these are not static. It merely acts to highlight that their view of the world has been socially constructed at a particular moment in time due to others around them and the cultural norms that have formed through time. Evolutionary considerations and the development of the world will lead to these assumptions and beliefs changing in future, thus peoples’ views and beliefs will alter as a result. Such engrained cultural norms influence actions and the way in which they deal with situations and these cultures, beliefs and norms can coexist peacefully or create conflict in particular settings. Although interpretivism has been chosen, it is appropriate to briefly acknowledge alternative epistemologies deemed unsuitable or unsustainable for this project.



### **3.2.3 Alternative Epistemologies**

The researcher must identify linkages between the world itself and their project (Van Maanen et al., 2007), whilst maintaining relevance and rigour in collaborative working (Anderson et al., 2001; Pettigrew, 2001; Rynes & McNatt, 1999) amidst the obscurities of social science (Leifer, 1992). The techniques employed to view the social world are not perfect or infallible and balance between techniques and data must be found, ensuring “respect [for] both the primacy of theory and the primacy of evidence” (Van Maanen et al., 2007, p.1147).

Comte (1830[1853]) alleges sociology as being the pinnacle of positivism, highlighting social actuality as occurring independent of the researcher and being based on empirical evidence. Husserl (1936 [1970]) claims that the lived world is a mere perception of the scientific world, with investigation taking the researcher away from lived experiences. A scientific world view is inflexible, governed by systems and regularities compared to the uncertainties dominating human existence. Few researchers demand this epistemology “rein in its excessive assumptions and claims” (Crotty, 1998, p.29), which leads to scepticism about its applicability in social sciences. Bryman (2004) believes that the same laws and principles should be used in natural and physical sciences. However, Johnson et al. (2006) see positivism as an influential, dominant player in management research epistemology, with its focus concerning facts, rather than understanding and meaning in interpretivism, on which this project relies.

It could be argued that critical realism is appropriate due to its focus on human interaction over physical, evidence-based scientific investigation (Bhaskar, 1998). However, critical reality neglects the imbued knowledge and experience the researcher has of the world, and both concepts remain independent from the project. This means that human perception and reality remain isolated. Further, it dismisses social entities including norms, cultures and gender relations, which cannot be directly observed (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2005). The aim of the research is to gain an insight into what it is like to lead people through conducting interviews. Looking through a critical realist lens would inhibit the results and, as such, theoretical assumptions only aim to create a temporary reality (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). It would, therefore, be remiss to use such an epistemological stance as a constituent part of this research.

### 3.2.4 Axiology

The level of insight and context provided by social research can be one of its strengths, with a considerate approach required to allow the researcher to make use of, and glean valuable narratives from data (Elliot, 2005). O’Gorman & MacIntosh (2015) highlight the importance and salience of reflexivity within social research, in that they are dealing with human feelings and emotions as opposed to facts more commonly seen in the natural sciences. In considering axiology, interpretivism is biased and value-laden, with researcher belief and comprehension of the world being the force behind a piece of work (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Method Component	Relating to research	Previous Studies
<i>Ontology (Subjective)</i>	The relationship between researcher and research subjects constitutes reality and it is the prerogative of the researcher to form their own subjective reality based on interactions. The interview will inform how the researcher perceives interactions and resulting research outcomes.	Laine & Vaara, 2007 Stavarakakis, 2008 Zueva-Owens, 2012
<i>Epistemology (Interpretivist)</i>	The lens through which the researcher learns new knowledge within the confines and context of their research. This creation happens separate from the researcher and the subject; any bias occurring will be dismissed.	Clark et al., 2010 Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016 Dy et al., 2016 Leitch et al., 2013 Lindebaum & Cassell, 2012 Nag & Gioia, 2012
<i>Axiology (Value creation)</i>	The resulting conclusions are bias free, with appropriate ethical approval sought prior to publishing of views, opinions and quotations from research subjects.	Atkins & Parker, 2012 Fehr et al., 2015 Kroeger & Weber, 2015

**Table 3.1 Methodological Components**

Table 3.1 clarifies methodological components, whilst highlighting earlier research that has used such components.

### 3.3 Methodological Options

Social science research depends upon observation and documentation of processes and actions displayed by those in the organization, especially those deemed as socially constructed (Van Maanen et al., 2007). The eventual aim is sense-making and producing causal links between processes and behaviours and their effectiveness in leadership and

management. Empirical studies lead to the production of data, allowing for progression and providing a medium for such sense-making to take place (Bailyn, 1977; Weick, 1989) in conjunction with existing literature and assumptions. Moreover, the researcher must define why and how such findings will develop their individual study and subsequently make a theoretical contribution to the discipline.

It has been well documented that there appear to be fairly substantial inconsistencies in what has been classed as management and organizational research (MOR) and its application in practical settings (Austin & Bartunek, 2012; Bansal et al., 2012; Briner et al., 2009; Cascio & Aguinis, 2008; Dipboye, 2007; Empson, 2013; Rynes et al., 2007), visited in section 3.2. Rather than a lucid and seamless correlation between the two concepts, academics have uncovered a completely different story, one which highlights conflict and a process far from continuous (Beech et al., 2010; MacIntosh et al., 2011). To gain most benefit from this research project, there needs to be a link between these two concepts and the real-life settings investigated.

There are many data collection techniques available, however, each of these has the potential to derive different results. It would be remiss of the researcher to think that the method employed would not have a bearing on the outcome(s) (Van Maanen et al., 2007). Deciding upon a technique which will meet the criteria for collection of one's data, whilst being appropriate for the overall study, is pivotal to the success of any research. An ill-chosen collection technique could unduly lengthen the research process and may go so far as to produce a data set that is unusable, or at least tarnish results. One of the more favourable choices for this research was to conduct interviews with professionals to gain greater insight into the techniques used to lead colleagues. That said, it might not be the particular questions asked that lead to the most useful, advantageous pieces of information. Questions should merely act as a catalyst in the interview process and aim to stimulate discussion, expression of feelings and emotions and, most importantly, the production of narratives and stories.

Interviews which take place privately may be preferred rather than the alternative focus group, which is an open forum where individuals may be reluctant to expose true feelings and opinions. Equally, by carrying these out within the organizational environment the research is focussing on has its benefits too. There is less inclination for the candidate to act out of the ordinary, which may occur should the interview take place away from their place of work. This is reinforced by Becker (1970, p.43):

“The people the field worker observes are ordinarily constrained to act as they would have in his absence, by the very social constraints whose effects interest him; he therefore has little chance, compared to practitioners of other methods, to influence what they do, for more potent forces are operating.”

In considering alternative data collection techniques, such as questionnaires and surveys, it has been noted historically that managers are inherently poor at the allocation of their own time (Burns, 1954; Horne & Lupton, 1965; Harper, 1968), meaning the possibility of falsified, rushed and ill-considered information being given is increased over other methods. Surveys and questionnaires rely upon individuals dedicating time to responding, and if the time is not sufficient, this could have a detrimental effect on responses and results. Further, an increased sample size does not necessarily mean you will be able to glean more usable data. Moreover, it may be more appropriate to study a smaller sample over a longer period of time, perhaps a longitudinal study, rather than employ what appears to be a larger numerical sample (Mintzberg, 1979b). However, questionnaires used previously for studies of transformational leadership have been criticized. Seltzer and Bass (1990) conducted a questionnaire on informed research with MBA educated organizational managers, which involved asking subordinates to answer questions based on their working unit, as well as how they perceived their manager's effectiveness. In light of this, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) made these observations:

- Subordinates may feel obliged to positively respond to questions on manager's orders
- Informants may merely have poor judgement and perception of unit effectiveness
- Responses limited to researcher offering, which may not reflect what respondents feel
- Answer wording may invoke false responses, silencing views and connotations

The current research is heavily, if not wholly, reliant upon the autonomous nature of the leaders being interviewed. According to Alvesson (1995, p.57), leadership charisma depends on the types of subordinates in a particular team:

“Well educated people, developing a self-image as being ‘autonomous’ are probably not easily affected by rhetoric of those business heroes often described as charismatic in popular and scientific literature.”

In summary, the types of information required for this thesis, i.e., the narratives and experiences of the individuals, are not commensurate with questionnaires or other data collection techniques. Not only does there appear to be too much inflexibility with questionnaires, together with the time allocation factor, there is an apparent inclination for respondents to give less honest responses based on the options given to them.

Subsequent sections in this chapter unveil the chosen data collection method, together with its structure, data sourcing and analysis.

### **3.3.1 Qualitative**

Qualitative research is an umbrella term to describe techniques that do not rely upon statistical or quantitative data collection. The researcher remains attached to the analysis and personal experiences of their project (Mills, 1959), adding to the robust nature of the research. Over quantitative data collection methods such as questionnaires and statistics that are heavily reliant upon numerical data, qualitative data collection is much more open to interpretation, which can lead to “serendipitous findings,” according to Miles (1979, p.590). Despite sometimes being an arduous, labour intensive operation (Miles, 1979), the benefits of qualitative data collection, together with the results often being indisputable (Smith, 1978), lead to this method being ubiquitously adopted across social science research.

The relationship between the observer and the observed is essential in qualitative research, assisting in the digression from the previously appreciated Cartesian dualism, which concentrated on the human mind and soul being separate from the physical body. In comparison, qualitative research employs a more diverse approach (Mintzberg, 1979a, b), thus dismissing the ability to measure by techniques used in other disciplines (Bonoma, 1985; Woodside, 2010). In context, body language and discourse are just two underappreciated elements that qualitative research considers over its statistical counterparts. When collected in an appropriate fashion, Miles and Huberman (1994, p.10) claim that qualitative data can assist with a “focus on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what ‘real life’ is like.” Qualitative research is all encompassing and viewed in its entirety, which is often not the case with more definitive numerical or statistical data. It has been cited that qualitative research can, in fact, provide useful, beneficial information and understanding to academics and practitioners (Crompton & Jones, 1988; Reason & Rowan, 1981; Van Maanen, 1979) when carried out in an appropriate fashion.

Having discussed the ontological and epistemological stances for this research, it is appropriate to pay attention to alternative collection methods dismissed in the process and the reasons for doing so, which will be dealt with in the next section.

### **3.3.2 Mixed Methods**

Described as the “third methodological movement” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p.5) and third research paradigm (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007) after quantitative and qualitative, mixed methods has received considerable attention in response to so called *paradigm wars* (Feilzer, 2009) in how data are mixed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Yet timing is a crucial aspect in research, especially if a researcher is expected to become familiar with two or more methods. Although doing qualitative and quantitative data collection can be done concurrently (Creswell, 2009), collection over an extended period of time is sometimes not feasible. The practicalities of employing both methods do not appeal to this research and would not give substantial additional benefit in their use.

### **3.3.3 Focus Groups**

Focus groups have long been established as a method whose results allege to harness qualitatively different information than if the same exploratory research was carried out individually (Goldman, 1962), with collected information seemingly more plentiful and having greater insights (Hess, 1968). Payne (1976) deemed those who knew one another as undesirable for a focus group and any results gained may be tarnished with bias, a supposition supported by Smith (1972). For this study, focus groups would not be suitable due to the sensitive, personal nature of questions, despite having been used in clinical (Edmonstone & Western, 2002) and academic (Turnbull & Edwards, 2005) leadership research. In groups, individuals will likely voice their opinions on what they are comfortable talking about. Desired responses for this research are those which would potentially not be possible in a group setting – e.g., conflict, disobedience. Further, interviewing leaders will likely elicit responses about subordinates and departmental functioning, these perhaps not always favourable. However, these are narrative types the research aims to tease from respondents, so it would be remiss to employ focus groups, knowing that less rich data would be collected.

### **3.3.4 Observation and Shadowing**

Czarniawska (2014) remarks there are myriad different observation techniques on offer to collect data in social science research, yet often these become skewed in the field. The onus falls upon the researcher to assess the options available and make a choice that will be the most methodically and ethically suitable. This type of data collection enables the

researcher to witness the day-to-day operation of an organization, and in the context of shadowing an individual, their habits and daily routine, something Mintzberg (1970) termed as structured observation. Undoubtedly a seasoned researcher would be able to gather rich data from observations. For this research, observation would not allow the interviewer to expose necessary narratives to substantiate the claims being investigated. In a potentially public forum during observation, a candidate is less likely to divulge sensitive experiences about leading colleagues or being led by colleagues. Observation would not provide any substantial benefit to the research aims and is unlikely to prove useful in exposing usable data from practitioners and, therefore, was dismissed as a data collection method.

### ***3.4 Narrativization and Interviews***

Narratives and narrativization have been used to broaden understanding in organization and management disciplines since the 1970s (Clark, 1972; Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976, 1978) and have established themselves as methods through which to gain in depth understanding (Boje, 2001, 2008; Brown & Jones, 2000; Czarniawska, 1998, 2004). They not only give a researcher the wealth of information from various experienced personalities, they also come with an appreciation of time and place, with more explicit implications behind particular actions, which other forms of data preclude (Dailey & Browning, 2014). Moreover, if similar stories are being repeated, this adds to the robust nature of the research and reifies its purpose.

Research on story telling has produced an intensely rich knowledge-base, previously unattainable through alternative methods (Stutts & Barker, 1999), and which some academics have claimed may act to re-energize this field of study (Czarniawska, 1998). Further research has showed not only people in organizations as storytellers, but also those reporting on them were too, i.e., the researcher (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). However, as with other areas of research, there will be differing opinions. One famous instance of contention between storytelling and theoretical contribution manifested between Dyer, Wilkins and Eisenhardt in a 1991 edition of the *Academy of Management Review*, with the former supporting case research in the production of stories which, in turn, strengthens their theoretical argument. Yet, despite Eisenhardt agreeing that good stories may be borne from experiences and be entertaining, they lack academic rigour if considered in isolation, rather than as a result of sustained, multiple analysis and interpretation from sources. Maclean et al. (2011) highlight a lack of attention given to the significance of

storytelling by elite actors, with reasoning including narcissistic professionals seemingly self-publishing their stories (Brown, 1997), which could have a causal effect on the relative legitimacy of their experiences in other settings. Despite Maclean et al.'s (2011) research focussing on business leaders, this dearth in literature legitimizes the research in that all of the actors chosen could be categorized as elite because of the professional roles that they fulfil, together with the additional administrative roles involved in the running of a business or unit.

Once narratives have been established which, according to Weick (1995), most organization-based realities are formed from, these can be merged with individual professional experiences, “a fundamental to sensemaking in organizations” (Maclean et al., 2011, p.19). From the interviewee's perspective, they are telling stories from their viewpoint, which may be different from someone else's. Equally, depending on circumstance, another person may not be able to emulate personal accounts laden with beliefs, opinions and bias. They use significant junctures in their career to account for personal and organizational changes, and potential reasons for them occurring (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Stories are also a way of attributing meaning to activities (Gabriel, 1995), and are a medium through which subjects (people) justify their existence and actions in their professional environment (Maclean et al., 2011).

To glean the most beneficial data, interviews have been deemed the most suitable data collection method, with Czarniawska (2014, p.31) emphasizing that the aim of any interview should be “the eliciting of narratives.” Interviews are seen as “the basic mode of inquiry,” aimed at exploring “an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth” (Seidman, 2012, p.8-9). Interviews are an established technique used in social science in the progression and promotion of research (Liedtka, 1992) and, as such, are routinely accepted into our so-called “interview society” (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997, p.309), with people frequently having to account for their actions. Together with participant observation, this has signalled a radical overhaul in cultural anthropology (DuBois, 1937; Kluckhohn, 1940). An interview can be summarized as:

“A collection of views and opinions on whatever topic is mentioned. This is not, of course, what most social scientists are after. They want to know facts, or they want to know about attitudes or about many other things outside the interview – the ‘reality behind it’, as it were” (Czarniawska, 2014, p.29).

According to Mishler (1986, p.8), “an interview is a joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other.” This reinforces



how questions act as catalysts in interviews, with considerations such as location, body language and atmosphere frequently going under-appreciated. Mishler (1986) further promotes interviews as an appropriate medium through which candidates can voice stories once offered room to speak. Kvale (1996) continues, claiming that knowledge production in society is a product of conversations and should be a key model for which to base interviews. These conversations should meet both individuals' needs. The interviewee has a position of superiority in an interview, in that they have the information the researcher wants and to get this, the interviewer has prepared appropriate questions and must display respect and attention. Nevertheless, an answer given by an interviewee may lead to a narrative, something which the interviewee may not have set out to offer initially. In the midst of answering, the subject may digress toward a story which may, in turn, harness more value in answering the question through use of a practical example rather than an answer with no evidence or substance.

Everyday conversation can elicit endless data yet can lack focus compared to directed questioning in pre-planned interviews; hence the need for structure, key to consistency and maintaining direction. Huffcutt and Arthur (1994) propose interview structure as:

“the reduction in procedural variance across applicants, which can translate into the degree of discretion that an interviewer is allowed in conducting the interview” (p.186).

There are various types of interview techniques to choose from, with associated considerations to be made and mechanisms that can be employed by the researcher to ensure the data collected are as rich as possible. Table 3.2 illustrates the types of interview structure available.

Interview Type	Definition		Use
Structured	This pre-planned interview involves control from the researcher and is conducive to keeping a conversation tightly focussed on the topic chosen and discussed together (Bryman, 2008). Questions are asked equally across interviews and in the same order (Corbetta, 2003).	<b>Advantages</b>	Buchanan et al., 2007 Kristof-Brown et al., 2002 McFarland et al., 2003 Liden, 2004
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Likelihood of interview items being overlooked due to pre-planned structure are limited</li> <li>• Researcher control over topic and format of interview, making coding and analysis of data easier</li> </ul>	
		<b>Disadvantages</b>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can lack richness and limit in-depth data</li> <li>• Rigid structure can be prohibitive and now allow fluidity, which has the potential to cause confusion</li> </ul>	
Unstructured	A more casual approach to interviewing is flexible and less directed. Interviews open with a broad question, with subsequent questions posed depending on responses (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).	<b>Advantages</b>	Kan & Parry, 2004 Parry, 1998 Waldman et al., 1998
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of previously unknown themes</li> <li>• Creation of relationships, which may help interview</li> </ul>	
		<b>Disadvantages</b>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of focus or prior thought of interview direction could lead to irrelevant conversation</li> <li>• Time consuming and resource intensive</li> </ul>	
Semi-structured	The researcher has an interview order, themes and questions in advance (David & Sutton, 2004), with ability to explore unconsidered subjects (Gray, 2004). This allows the interviewer more freedom than other interview forms, promoting spontaneous conversation (Patton, 2014).	<b>Advantages</b>	Fitzgerald et al., 2013 Ford & Collinson, 2011 Graham, 2015 Greig et al., 2012 Preston & Price, 2012
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has structure as well as flexibility to be able to be controlled, yet stimulate further guided conversation by the interviewer</li> </ul>	
		<b>Disadvantages</b>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competent interview skills required to remain on track</li> <li>• Interview questions can be open to bias from researcher</li> </ul>	

**Table 3.2 Interview Structure (adapted from Lochrie et al., 2015)**

Despite academics' ambivalence to the meaning of *structure* (Motowidlo et al., 1992), it has been noted that structured interviews, i.e., a formal sequence of questions, have proven of more use than unstructured counterparts, particularly advantageous from a psychometric viewpoint (Hakel, 1989; Mayfield, 1964; Schmitt, 1976; Campion et al., 1988). Semi-structured interviews allow for "retrospective and real-time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest" (Gioia et al., 2012, p.5). Rapley (2004, p.15) attaches a succinct definition to interviewing, involving a hands-on experience where parties "sit down and talk about a specific topic" with the goal of eliciting "facts, attitudes, perceptions and viewpoints on the reality of the specific topic in question" (McLachlan & Garcia, 2015, p.199). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow flexibility, whilst retaining rigour and consistency throughout. To ensure appropriateness of questions, and to identify shortcomings, a pilot study was conducted (Kvale, 2007), whilst also allowing for question refinement (Turner, 2010).

The interviewer plays a vital role in the interview process. However, their action and conduct depend on different factors, including the subjects being interviewed, setting, types of answers given and style of interview technique. In verifying interviews, Table 3.3 identifies key characteristics and definitions of the most common data collection techniques.

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Source</b>
Participant Observation	Closely watching and making comment on a person performing an operation or set of activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witnessing processes as they happen</li> <li>• Shows people in their working environment</li> </ul>	Boje, 1991 Chapman & Zweig, 2005 Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 Feldman, 2000 Landau et al, 2014
Life History	A complete, honest account of one's remembered life consisted of what they wish people to know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolutionary</li> <li>• Assessing attempts to legitimize their success</li> <li>• Personal</li> <li>• Response determined</li> </ul>	Atkinson, 1998 Maclean et al, 2011 Pye, 2002 Rhodes & Brown, 2005 Sillince & Mueller, 2007
Longitudinal	Continued observation over a period of time, analysing the same variables throughout the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to observe change over time</li> <li>• Can show progression</li> <li>• Comparisons can be made to highlight progression</li> </ul>	Landau et al, 2014 Leonard-Barton, 1990 Martin et al., 2016

**Table 3.3 Data Collection Characteristics**

However, as with any fieldwork, interviews are not infallible. As the researcher organizing an interview, we are intruding on the professional's working environment, and routine. Despite this, it is crucial to understand that their actions, behaviours and, most

pertinently, their answers, may contain bias. They may feel pressured to give the *right* answer, which may differ from the real answer. No matter how much reassurance is given of anonymity and confidentiality, the interviewee may feel obliged to protect themselves and remain loyal to their employer, with few options to overcome this.

According to Silverman (1993), there are two overarching positions to view research interviews - neopositivism and romanticism, whilst Alvesson (2003) additionally proposes localism. A neopositivist creates context free facts about reality, with little researcher influence and bias (Alvesson, 2003). Via this approach, an interview acts as “a pipeline for transmitting knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p.113). Responses may be superficial and reserved, with resulting devices such as re-interviewing being used to clarify consistency and allow reflection (Acker et al., 1991; Collinson, 1992). However, the romantic aims at creating a rapport and harnessing trust with candidates to achieve authenticity (Fontana & Frey, 1994) and “deeper, fuller conceptualizations of those aspects of our subjects’ lives we are most interested in understanding” (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p.103). This position promotes active interviewing (Ellis et al., 1997; Holstein & Gubrium, 1997), where the interviewer uses their skill to befriend the respondent, transforming them “from a repository of opinions and reasons or a well-spring of emotions into a productive source of knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p.121). Lastly, Alvesson’s (2003) localist view claims that responses are contextually fixed and should not act as a foundation to conduct data collection outwith that socially grounded context. Alvesson (2003) continues, proposing that localists contest those being interviewed are not exposing external events, but “producing situated accounts, drawing upon cultural resources in order to produce morally adequate accounts” (p.17). The above explains a number of interpretations of interviews, with the preceding section looking at types of questions and questioning available.

Without coercing the interviewee toward certain answers, the interviewer is at liberty to ask styles of questions and pose questions in a particular way, ultimately guiding the respondent to a more detailed explanation. Questions remain consistent throughout the interviews but are worded and posed in such a way to encourage open-ended responses (Gall et al., 2003), launched with statements such as *tell me about* and *give me an example of*. These grant interviewees the freedom to answer in their own words (Taheri et al., 2015) and encourage opinions, whilst developing stories based on interview narrative and reducing interviewer bias. By ensuring questions are as liberal as possible, yet focusing on the core subject, the researcher can expose invaluable experiential stories. One

particular downfall of open-ended questions over less text-laden responses could be during coding, with difficulty emerging from theme extraction from transcripts (Creswell, 2008). Yet, this potential time constraint is outweighed by the richness of the qualitative data.

Open-ended over closed-ended questioning was chosen which, in comparison, is remarkably restrictive, with candidates limited to answers devised by the interviewer (Taheri et al., 2015) or a simple *yes/no* binary response. Reciprocal information available and the quality and quantity of information is limited. If response options are given, then interviewee responses will be directed (Bernard, 2011), even if they would like to offer an answer not given (Krosnick, 1999). Table 3.4 shows prior studies conducted and the data collection method(s) used before the chapter develops the notion of working inductively with data.

<b>Data Collection Type</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Reference (last 10 years)</b>
Semi-structured Interviews	NHS	Burgess et al., 2015
		Currie et al., 2015
		McGivern et al., 2015
		Martin et al., 2015
	Higher Education	Adcroft & Taylor, 2013 Bolden et al., 2009 Dresel et al., 2015 Hanbury et al., 2008 Jungert, 2013
	Other (philanthropy)	Maclean et al., 2015
Focus Groups	NHS	Martin et al., 2015
	Higher Education	Fullana et al., 2016 Gullifer & Tyson, 2010 Hanbury et al., 2008 Winstone et al., 2016
Longitudinal Study	NHS	Martin et al., 2016
	Education	Andres & Adamuti-Trache, 2008 Adamuti-Trache & Andres, 2008 Endedijk et al., 2014 Rodriguez & Cano, 2007
Case Study	NHS (Single site)	Buchanan et al., 2007
	Higher Education	Marshall & Case, 2010 Ryan & Neumann, 2013 Taha & Cox, 2016 Venuleo et al., 2016

**Table 3.4 Types of Data Collection Technique**

### ***3.5 Working Inductively with Data***

This approach originates from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory, whereby theory is discovered from the data, rather than attempting to predict theoretical perspectives before research begins. Prior to this, Merton's (1949) wholly coincidental approach was not motivated by the discovery of theory through social research. Instead, his research was aimed at advancing existing over creating new theories, something that Glaser and Strauss (1967) openly criticized:

“This suggests an overemphasis in current sociology on the verification of theory, and a resultant de-emphasis on the prior step of discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to research. Testing theory is, of course, also a basic task confronting sociology” (p.1-2).

In contrast, and in support of their own findings, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.6) believe that the outcomes of their approach would be “more successful than theories logically deduced from a priori assumptions,” ignoring the common acceptance that theories had all been discovered and future research aimed at testing them (Charmaz, 1983). Instead of moulding research to fit within existing frameworks, this approach grants the researcher not only the ability to create their own theory based on the data, but allows them to challenge existing theory more convincingly with empirical findings by repeatedly interacting with data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stern, 1994; Strauss, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). The eventual aim remains to reach a theoretical contribution.

More recently, Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory approach has been described as the process by which “the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings” (Gephart, 2004, p.457) can be analysed to form coherent, nascent theories. Further, Suddaby (2006) reinforces the use of grounded theory when attempting to create and understand meaning “out of intersubjective experience” (p.634) from actors. The stages of data analysis to a grounded theory approach according to Silverman (2006, p.235) include:

1. An initial attempt to develop categories which illuminate data
2. An attempt to saturate categories with appropriate cases to demonstrate their relevance
3. Development of categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance outside the setting

The Gioia method as an inductive research approach has received interest from researchers in pursuit of new, convincing theoretical concepts (Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

Prior theoretical development attempts seemingly lack promotion of originality (Corley & Gioia, 2011) and accordingly, Gioia et al. (2012, p.2) highlight that “advances in knowledge that are too strongly rooted in what we already know delimit what we can know,” thus emphasizing the need to temporarily overlook previous conceptualizations. This approach originated from an inductive piece of research contained in an essentially deductive, quantitative and statistical data-reliant journal, whose history had not previously seen such radical methodological thinking. Subsequently, reviewers demanded proof that data gathering and analysis had been carried out logically, and that they had not been randomly picked to suit the research claims and named accordingly. The following represents Gioia’s (2004, p101) interpretation of his method and how it positively relates to context, whilst contributing to theory:

“In my research life, I am a grounded theorist. I pick people’s brains for a living, trying to figure out how they make sense of their organizational experience. I then write descriptive, analytical narratives that try to capture what I think they know. Those narratives are usually written around salient themes that represent their experience to other interested readers.”

Gioia et al. (2012) go on to suggest that qualitative research can use multiple data sources, with semi-structured interviews forming an essential part. Building upon Morgan’s (1986) proposal of research as engagement, interviews gift the researcher the ability “to obtain both retrospective and real-time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest” (Gioia et al., 2012, p.5).

As will be explored in the analyses sections, coding of the data whilst in the midst of collection is commonplace and aligns to Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) open coding concept. Accordingly, researchers have cited it as somewhat contrary and remiss to separate interviews and analysis (Langley, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). Themes can be identified even during data collection and once formal collection is complete, the researcher is able to formalize the process and code to form a logical, coherent whole that, with theoretical underpinning, contributes to the overall aims and outcomes. This is termed as creating a data structure, which aims to illustrate first and second order concepts, with the final stage highlighting how these relate to the research. A well-designed visual aid can show how the researcher has taken raw data through the coding stages to produce themes, an elemental component showing a meticulous approach in a research project (Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010).

### ***3.6 Sourcing and Selecting Data***

Before research begins, it is imperative for the researcher to ensure beyond reasonable doubt that data collection will be available and achievable. In empirical research, the absence of attainable data would prove inhibiting, with corporate policies and lack of availability being prevalent (Steelman et al., 2014). Further, a researcher may gather a multitude of data through various means and it is up to them to decide what is useful and not. Should data be deemed not useful, this may divert focus from the project aim or hinder the progression of the research.

Academia, healthcare and local government sectors were chosen having assessed viability and the likelihood of sufficient access being granted. Not only was access a deciding factor, but equally so were the outcomes of the study. The settings needed professionals who, together with their trained role, fulfilled an additional administrative position which meant that they lead peers. This additional role would involve the leadership of people who would have the same or similar professional competencies as them. The final aspect required for the study consisted of an increased level of autonomy due to an unusually high degree of professional competency. The highly skilled nature of the professionals in the settings chosen meant that workplace autonomy was likely to be increased compared to other settings.

#### **3.6.1 Sample**

The participants for this study fulfil, or have fulfilled, administrative functions on top of their academic, clinical and local government roles. The sample required these individuals to be operating in low-authority environments where an increased level of autonomy is bestowed upon workers. This type of sampling is termed as theoretical sampling, as it is led by the theoretical concept of low-authority environments, which will be inhabited by highly autonomous individuals. Access to participants in all three settings was secured through a combination of using contacts within existing networks and luck, supported by Pettigrew's (1990) "planned opportunism" (p.274). Subsequent interviews were secured from candidates nominating colleagues, as well as candidates being speculatively contacted.



Academic			Clinical		
23 Worldwide Universities			7 Scottish Health Boards		
Director of Research	1	28	Lead Clinician	14	35
Head of Institute	1				
Head of Department	3		Deputy Clinical Director	1	
Deputy Head of School	1				
Associate Dean	1		Clinical Director	13	
Deputy Dean	1				
Head of School	4		Chief of Medicine	3	
Dean	3				
Executive Dean	1		Associate Medical Director	3	
Associate Deputy Principal	1				
Pro-Vice Chancellor	9		Board Medical Director	1	
Vice Principal	2				
	Local Government				
	14 Scottish Councils				
	Deputy Group Leader	1	23		
	Group Leader	4			
	Leader of the Opposition	2			
	Deputy Leader of the Council	6			
	Leader of the Council	9			
	Provost	1			

**Table 3.5 Interviewee Role Breakdown**

To mitigate bias as far as possible, interviews were carried out across 23 global universities, seven Scottish health boards and NHS subsidiary organizations and 14 Scottish local authorities. However, despite participant access being one of the most difficult features of research (Rynes & McNatt, 2001), this does not preclude reluctant participants. Table 3.5 summarizes the three settings, highlights the geographical breadth and the range of hierarchical positions captured.

Despite being criticized for suitability in qualitative interviewing (Legard et al., 2003; Gillham, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) and a perceived lack of personal touch, telephone interviews in social science research is increasing due to the reduced cost involved and increased reachability (Vogl, 2013). For this research, to reach as wide a sample as achieved without using telephone interviews would have extended the research time. Having conducted face-to-face interviews, and piloted telephone interviewing, it was concluded that there was little noticeable variance between methods and that continuing with this combination of techniques would have a positive effect on progress, without being detrimental to the research outcomes. In practical terms, all interviews were audio recorded to enable post collection transcription. This was either done via a mobile phone

recording device for face-to-face interviews, or through recording telephone conversations, all by consent of participants. Following audio recording, the researcher transcribed the interviews, however, it was necessary due to the sheer volume of data to outsource some of this work to ensure timescales were not compromised. In total, the 86 interviews conducted (57 face-to-face and 29 telephone) were carried out over a six-month period, with the shortest running for 11 minutes 25 seconds, the longest for 1 hour 23 minutes, and an overall mean duration of 29 minutes. The chapter continues with consideration to research ethics, followed by the stages in the data analysis process of the thesis.

### ***3.7 Research Ethics***

Research must consider the conduct of the researcher and confidentiality of the interviewees. This section considers the ethical obligations of the research, imperative in seeking to produce robust, rigorous research. Termed as the section of philosophy concerned with human behaviour and conduct (Cameron & Price, 2009), ethics deem actions acceptable and unacceptable against a set of normative behaviours in the midst of cultural, social and psychological expectations categorized by humans. However, these should not be confused with the dichotomy between legal and illegal. The uncovering of the exploitation of vulnerable parties has led to the tarnishing of social research reputation (Watts, 2011), forcing academics to adhere to codes of practice, which Stanley and McLaren (2007, p.35) purport to help:

“to protect the rights, health and well-being of research participants, utilising an approach that is sensitive to diversity, cultural values and the social and cultural context in which research is conducted.”

The duty of ensuring that research remains within these confines and is ethical ultimately belongs to the researcher. Some norms are culturally imbued, with ethical decisions sometimes manifesting subconsciously, meaning a person may make an appropriate decision based on a contextual situation and not consciously consider the ethical aspects associated with their choice.

Informants seek assurance that their insights through narratives of organizational experiences and interactions be treated sensitively and their identity protected. One informant proposed to Gioia et al. (1994, p.42) during interview, “I’ll tell you anything you want to know, so long as you don’t embarrass me,” highlighting wariness of informants, yet a willingness to participate.

Potential Concern	Researcher Action
<i>Identity of subjects</i>	To protect identities of interviewees and organizations, all data was anonymised, erasing names of subjects and institutions. This was assured to participants before they agreed to take part.
<i>Sensitive nature of data</i>	Subjects exposed failures in colleagues and organizational issues affecting their working practices. Any stories were anonymised in order not to identify individuals or institutions.
<i>Data Handling</i>	Data were stored electronically in a secure format and not shared until anonymised. Only the researcher was privy to the identification of interview subjects and institutions.
<i>Consistency and rigour</i>	Questions and interview format were consistent throughout interviews, whilst adhering to the University's ethical policy
Interviewees gave consent to participate in the study, to being audio recorded and to the use of anonymous quotations in published work. They were reassured of their ability to withdraw from the process at any time with no repercussions.	

**Table 3.6 Ethical Concerns and Actions**

Table 3.6 adapted from the Social Research Association (2003), proposes ethical concerns with this research and the steps taken by the researcher to reduce the impact of these on outcomes.

### ***3.8 Data Analysis Tool – Thematic Analysis***

Despite prevalence within social science research, thematic analysis remains a mysterious, poorly defined concept (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2003), with confusion as to how it should be done (see Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). A simple search of thematic analyses literature highlights Braun and Clarke's (2006) research as being cited over 28,000 times, with Ryan and Bernard's (2003) used over 3,000 times. Boyatzis (1998) does not characterize thematic analysis as a method - more of a tool to use alongside other methods. Whereas this differs from Braun and Clarke's (2006) research describing thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.79). They continue by proposing thematic analysis suffers from being poorly marketed and that it remains overshadowed by alternatives.

Rubin and Rubin (1995, p.226) express excitement when carrying out analysis, because "you discover themes and concepts embedded throughout your interviews." This proposition forgoes the active role the researcher should be playing in a research process. Such themes which seemingly *emerge* from the data can be misconstrued as residing

within data. Ely et al. (1997) demonstrate that if themes are to *reside* anywhere, this will be in the researcher's mind in creating links between data and understanding. In carrying out thematic analysis of data, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest researchers use the following phases in Table 3.7 as a guide.

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarization with data	Data transcription, whilst actively recording ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding data in a systematic fashion throughout data set
3. Searching for themes	Re-focusing the analysis at the broader level. Forming codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing themes	Checking themes against the coded extracts and in relation to one another. Formation of a thematic map of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Further refinement of identified themes. Locating the overall story of the analysis
6. Producing the report	Writing-up the analysis results with vivid extract examples and comprehensive commentary

**Table 3.7 Thematic Analysis Phases (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)**

Adequate recording of information during interviews is essential for the researcher to reflect and refer back to the content. Post-interview transcription is one of the most commonly used methods to prepare for analysis of data (Bazeley, 2007). Initially, personal transcription was used, however, time constraints and pressures of further interviews led to needing to outsource. This could be construed as removing the researcher from being immersed in the data, however, all data were treated equally and fairly during the analysis process. Following the format of the structured interviews, transcripts were each presented in exactly the same way, which Schegloff (1997) highlights as granting participants the ability to speak for themselves.

To become immersed in the data, it is important to become familiar with it, reading over transcripts several times, especially those outsourced. Familiarity subsequently allows the researcher to make correlations between interviews, with initial codes and ideas being noted even in the early collection stages. Upon reaching the end of the process, themes should be more defined, allowing the researcher to collate their findings and compile the results chapter.

To combat the assumption that qualitative research is not sufficient in its justification, along with dubiety as to whether researchers base their theory creation on scant evidence (Gioia et al., 2012), the Gioia method was employed, as discussed in section 3.5. The

most commonly cited and peer reviewed versions of data treatment, some of which are outlined in Table 3.8, tend to follow the structured Gioia method.

Journal	Reference	
Academy of Management Journal	Anand et al., 2007 Balogun & Johnson, 2004 Dacin et al., 2010 Maitlis, 2005 Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007 Mantere et al., 2012 Nag et al., 2007	Nag & Gioia, 2012 Powell & Baker, 2014 Pratt et al., 2006 Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012 Strike & Rerip, 2016 Rerup & Feldman, 2011
Administrative Science Quarterly	Clark et al., 2010 Corley & Gioia, 2004	Gioia et al., 2010 Gioia & Thomas, 1996
Human Relations	Corley, 2004 Gill & Larson, 2014	Solebello et al., 2016
Journal of Management Inquiry	Carlsen et al., 2014 Lensges et al., 2016	Poonamallee, 2011
Journal of Management Studies	Anand & Jones, 2008 Kjærgaard et al., 2011	Maguire & Phillips, 2008
Organization Science	Gioia et al., 1994 Harrison & Corley, 2011 Labianca et al., 2000	Rindova et al., 2011 Thomas et al., 2001
Strategic Organization	Ravasi & Phillips, 2011	

**Table 3.8 Studies Using the Gioia Method (adapted from Gioia et al., 2012)**

Consequently, this thesis follows a variation of the Gioia method, during which data travels through a coding sequence of first and second order themes, before arriving at a final destination outcome which then informs the final overall project outcomes. According to Gioia (2004), for the first order coding process, it is important to get engrossed in your data, with him purporting that “you gotta get lost before you can get found” highlighting the importance of immersion in the whole system before forming conclusions. The researcher’s intimate knowledge of the data, and viewing the data as dynamic, meant that relationships between the concepts led to theoretical development not possible if viewing the structure as static (Gioia et al., 2012).

### **3.8.1 Data Analysis Software – NVivo**

The availability and use of computer software to aid qualitative data analysis has increased, with such tools becoming prevalent in published material (Jones & Diment, 2010), especially top-ranking journals (see Table 3.9). These can be employed to varying extents, from electronic filing, to textual searches through vast amounts and types of data. However, despite this increased utility of software packages with ever developing

functions, there remains ambiguity as to which tool is best suited for different types of research (Sotiriadou et al., 2014). Aside from the most well recognized quantitative package, SPSS [Statistical Package for Social Sciences] (Coakes & Steed, 2009), qualitative research has a number of emerging pieces of software designed to assist data analysis and interpretation, including NVivo (Jones & Diment, 2010) and Leximancer (Cretchley et al., 2010). Software can assist in combatting the loss of closeness to data (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Weitzman & Miles, 1995), yet can also detrimentally pave the way to becoming overly engrossed in analysis and to a lack of researcher removal from the analytical process (Gilbert, 2002; Seale, 2002; di Gregorio, 2003). Due to its ability to deal with larger amounts of qualitative data (Jones & Diment, 2010), and its popularity (see Table 3.9) NVivo was chosen. Amongst its wide range of filing and exporting capabilities, NVivo allows comparison and contrasting of themes (Welsh, 2002). The importing capabilities allow for transcripts to be adorned with codes, notes and labels (Lamertz & Heugens, 2009).

<b>(2007-2017)</b>	<b>NVivo</b>	<b>Leximancer</b>
Administrative Science Quarterly	3	0
American Sociological Review	4	0
British Journal of Management	27	0
European Management Review	3	0
Human Relations	42	1
International Journal of Management Reviews	1	0
Journal of Business Research	43	2
Journal of Management	5	0
Journal of Management Enquiry	8	1
Journal of Management Studies	19	0
Leadership Quarterly	3	0
Management Learning	22	0
Organization	11	0
Organization Science	13	0
Strategic Management Journal	5	1
Strategic Organization	4	0
	213	5

**Table 3.9 Use of Qualitative Analysis Software in Top Ranked Research**

Following transcription of interviews, codes were attributed to relevant information, which will be outlined and further explored in the following chapter. It should be noted that NVivo does not automatically code, and this process is done by the researcher. NVivo is rather a filing system to assist in the collation of information, however, with its exporting capabilities, can provide organize similar information for presentation.

### ***3.9 Conclusion***

This chapter outlined the chosen methodology for this research. Interpretivism as a philosophical paradigm was validated, together with why a subjective ontology was an appropriate ontology to go alongside. The chosen data collection technique was critiqued, again paying attention to alternatives, followed by the sample makeup and how this was subsequently analysed. Research ethics were then reflected upon followed by how the researcher overcame obstacles in the process. The chapter continued with describing the use of computer software in storing, coding and analysing the data due to the volume of interviews involved and was followed by a section outlining the stages of the analytical process.

## 4 Data Analysis

“...most of the time, we make it up as we go along” (16C 2-41).

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents interview findings using open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to pilot-tested questions on line management and reporting responsibilities. Initial questioning explored leading colleagues and reactions when attempting to influence others. There was disparity between who individuals perceived as their boss, their actual boss and some expressing not having a boss. The chapter continues, highlighting leader challenges and coping strategies.

Data Analysis 1 Initial Themes (PN = Parent Node, SN = Sub Node)			Data Analysis 2 Refined Data	
<i>Concept</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>	>	<u>Category 1 - Line Management</u>
Change (PN)	46	70		
Reluctance	4	6		
Stagnation & Inertia	18	30		
Tangible Changes	29	38	>	<u>Category 2 - Management Structure</u>
Management (PN)	0	0		
Challenges (SN)	0	0		
Organisational	34	43		
Personal	35	41	>	<u>Category 3 – Professional Working Issues</u> <i>Concept 1 – Collaboration &amp; Collegiality</i> <i>Concept 2 – Cooperation</i> <i>Concept 3 – Primus Inter Pares</i> <i>Concept 4 – Conflict</i>
Working with Others	41	49		
Dualistic Roles (SN)	82	279		
Disengagement	10	13		
Engagement	5	6	>	<u>Category 4 – Methods to Management</u> <i>Concept 1 – Persuasion</i> <i>Concept 2 – Sanction</i>
Line Management (SN)	74	122		
Managerialism (SN)	39	99		
Style (SN)	16	25		
Training (SN)	77	120	>	<u>Concept 5 – Challenges</u> <i>Concept 1 – Working with Others</i> <i>Concept 2 – Organizational</i> <i>Concept 3 - Personal</i>
People (PN)	0	0		
Background (SN)	83	106		
Collaboration (SN)	18	23		
Collegiality (SN)	25	52	>	
Conflict (SN)	23	29		
Cooperation (SN)	76	124		
Credibility (SN)	28	45		
Evaluation (SN)	6	7	>	
Freedom (SN)	8	10		
Persuasion (SN)	69	105		
Pressure (SN)	28	56		
Primus Inter Pares (SN)	6	7	>	
Sanction (SN)	17	30		
Time (SN)	15	16		

**Table 4.1 Development of Codes**



Table 4.1 illustrates the developmental process that took place from initial coding of the data to what will be further examined in this chapter. The final column was reached through extracting the pertinent, but not necessarily the most popular, nodes from the initial data coding process. These will now be further explored in sequence below.

Further to this, Table 4.2 illustrates how the quotation references have been set out.

Quotation Reference Key				
90	A	3	-	16
Interview Number	<u>Sector</u> A – Academic C – Clinician P – Politician	Transcript Page Number	-	Transcript Line Number

**Table 4.2 Quotation Reference Key**

## ***4.2 Leadership and the challenges***

This section details individual leadership methods, whilst highlighting the challenges faced. Working with a diverse range of experts and subject specialists throughout all sectors will be challenging, not least when people do not appreciate or understand who their boss actually is.

### **4.2.1 Category 1 - Line Management**

This question aimed to expose from candidates (a) who they manage, (b) who manages them and (c) who they see as their boss. There was ambiguity surrounding this question as candidates failed to define who they saw as their boss. This could be as a result of having an administrative role on top of their original role, however, it could also be blamed upon a sense of elitism and not actually reporting to anyone in particular because of their status.

“Managing academics in a university would actually be easier to manage a class of primary school children, because you could tell them to sit down and be quiet” (15A 2-40).

The general consensus shared amongst academics was that no particular method could be employed to manage colleagues, and that the process was somewhat fluid and “a moving target” (15A 2-45). Academic leaders felt the majority of their time was spent attempting to manage the disinterested, with focus instead being on personal research, which received more passion and attention over other aspects of the job. Those engrossed in their research were described as doing “what they always want to do, which is head down,

blinkers on, this is my subject area” (68A 3-37), with little consideration given to the wider institution. Further, not only do some not engage with the leadership process, “awkward members of staff” (08A 2-14), they outwardly obstruct others who choose to, or have been chosen to complete onerous, often unremunerated, roles. Despite it being “known to everybody who they are” (08A 2-15), and at the annoyance of the leader, such individuals are non-conformist and in a childish fashion, continue to “throw a strop or pull a face” (08A 2-16), despite leaders’ best attempts.

Conversely, leaders were found to be fulfilling additional administrative roles to prohibit less capable colleagues, alleging that they were “resistant to letting other people do it badly” (49A 1-31). These individuals who become fixated on their area of expertise are perhaps subject leaders, however “because you’re good at doing research, does not necessarily make you a good manager” (08A 2-40). In this vein “one striking aspect of academics playing managerial roles is that the power of argument is very strong” (27A 3-44), meaning the production of data can prove incontestable when leading, with no room for negotiation on presentation of facts.

“Everyone hates you because the doctors won’t do as managers ask them to and the managers hate you because of the doctors. The doctors hate you because you’re asking them to do stuff that they don’t want to do. The managers hate you because the doctors won’t do as they’re told” (28C 1-39).

Similar to academics, clinicians appear difficult to lead because “they are very autonomous. They’re intelligent; they’re motivated; they work quite independently” (35C 4-29). A further issue was ambivalence as to who was being led and who was the leader. This issue was exacerbated by confusion as to who the employing authority was to clinicians, perhaps indicating the first inclination toward a multiple, rather than singular view of organization:

“The difficulty with consultants is that we are employed by the health board to deliver certain aspects of a service, but actually my line management structure goes to the GMC (General Medical Council)” (00C 2-28).

“The management structure here has really not got an awful lot to do with me if I behave as a reasonable doctor, and I treat my patients, it doesn’t matter what the management structure here thinks. So it’s a strange process” (00C 2-45).

Clinicians proposed it was difficult to lead consultant colleagues and even more so if colleagues were not as intellectually stimulated as them. Leadership colleagues may fall into this category of not being the best doctor. As a result of this supposed avoidance manoeuvre, some leaders “very quickly get known as a failed surgeon” (16C 2-9), “take

on management mantra in a big way and almost act as barriers between the clinicians and the management” (14C 4-23) and lack respect and credibility from colleagues.

“You have the people who are doing the managing who are not necessarily, in a clinical sense, the best doctors. They’re not necessarily at the peak of their profession. They may be perfectly good doctors, obviously, but they are going into management or taking on a managerial role because they are not necessarily keeping up with the new clinical developments” (14C 2-40).

Clinicians did not like being led by those non-clinically trained, such as Clinical Services Managers, despite clear hierarchical structures. Contesters highlighted that “they [non-clinically trained managers] are our managers, and that’s that” (19C 4-13), however, they also noted they had “not done the training we have done and are less qualified than us” (19C 4-13). This could be attributed to the medical and clinical management structures being blurred or multiple, with differing interpretations of leadership responsibility and accountability:

“Where the crossover between a clinical management structure and a non-clinical management structure happens, I don’t think it’s clear. I’ve asked people about this and I don’t think anyone really understands” (19C 6-47).

However, there appears to be an engrained culture within then NHS where general, medical management or clinicians cannot work in harmony, consequently having a detrimental effect on the service delivered. This leads to staff members not engaging with leaders, seeing them as a necessary evil and with different objectives and outcomes from colleagues:

“The structure in the NHS is very much that you’re either a manager and you’re one of them – a bad guy, who is carrying out government targets and forcing policies” (51C 3-30).

“Poacher turned gamekeeper, or gamekeeper turned poacher, depending on which way you want to look at it. I’ve had all the jokes...We would have key-in numbers, and he gave me 007. I went back to the practice...One of my colleagues said what is it? 666? So I thought there’s a view of clinicians versus management. There is a view that you are going over to the dark side” (38C 5-53).

This could be due to a lack of trust given to clinical leaders. As with any organization, those who excel are likely to be promoted at an increased rate to those who are not as motivated. This may explain clinician reluctance to engage with leadership colleagues.

“We’ve actually got managers who are exceptionally good and even then it’s difficult to get them to trust those managers, even although they universally recognize they are very good, because they know that person may well be moved very quickly into a different area, because the organization will say she’s good – we’ll take her somewhere else. Then we will be left with the donkey” (16C 3-7).

Those who are good at leadership are promoted at a faster rate, with underperforming leaders stagnating and staying in positions. This has a detrimental effect on the department, as well as acting to stifle others' promotional and progression prospects.

“Our previous Clinical Director probably had Asperger's actually, I suspect. Probably was fairly high on the autism spectrum. She was a terrible manager and created quite a lot of conflict within the department, which culminated in a really bad mismanagement of a colleague” (40C 1-38).

This emphasizes that change can be difficult in a processual sense, with it being made more difficult by those who are failing at their jobs and no mechanisms to move them on or out.

“It's not about bosses. It's the co-working aspect of it” (30P 3-47).

Politicians agreed with this, with inconsistency between responses offered, confirming that there is still ambiguity.

“I don't actually have a boss because I don't report to anyone officially. There is no one responsible for my development other than myself. I don't have an appraisal” (31P 5-15).

This issue is exacerbated by a dualistic relationship, as seen in academia and clinical settings. Politicians work with the officers of the council yet are in post for the community they serve.

“I have a clear understanding between me and the senior officers of the council that this is where the buck stops and I think that is the only way to be when you're a leader” (63P 3-9).

It is understandable why this issue arises, with different party interests; however, this could be of detriment to effectiveness, efficiency and lengthen the overall decision-making process.

There seems confusion as to who is being led and who is leading. This could be due to being less intellectually stimulated, less able or not being part of the same organization. Subsequent sections detail further issues with leading peers and the issues faced by leaders.

#### **4.2.2 Category 2 - Management Structure**

“I see nobody as my boss. This is where it gets tricky because I don't like being told what to do” (61A 6-18).

There are inconsistencies between who senior academics report to, with use of words such as *if* and *think* generating uncertainty. Along with those who define their boss,

including “the university principal is your boss, without a doubt” (47A 4-9), “the president of this branch of the university” (54A 4-45) and “the corporate body is my boss” (53A 4-40), others did not observe this typical hierarchy. Those who responded with an individual as their ultimate boss were joined with others who saw a collective of people to whom they were accountable, including “the student is the boss, because the student is the person who pays your salary” (64A 6-18) and “I have two bosses, as it happens, both of whom are junior to me in the seniority in university as researchers” (80A 4-34). There were candidates who clearly understood who their boss was yet questioned their abilities: “My boss is the director of the business school and he’s not as good at his job as I am” (78A 5-17).

Most interestingly, academics viewed themselves as being their own boss, not accountable to an individual or institution. Reasons included having “a problem with authority” (62A 4-30), continuing by saying “I am my own boss and I get to decide how things are done” (62A 4-31). As a result of this perceived autonomous working condition, individuals are granted the ability to “set your own diary and there are certain things that you are required to go to” (64A 6-14).

“I know who is my boss, but I don’t necessarily see them as my boss, because I don’t necessarily know that they’re going to sort the problems that occur” (46C 7-9).

Academics and clinicians are very autonomous, intelligent and prefer working independently. Some were adamant who their boss was, with some appointing the patient as their boss as they, ultimately, judge performance, whilst others remained unconvinced. Sometimes there was even confusion as to the definition of what a boss is and what they can and cannot do: “Everybody. There are bosses everywhere” (57C 5-17). The use of words including *theoretically* only reinforces uncertainty. This is despite clear hierarchical medical and hospital management structures. Some clinicians were offended at the inference that those not of the same intellectuality could be considered their boss: “I don’t see them [non-medically trained managers] as my bosses” (33C 5-52).

“I don’t know, and I’ve tried to ask this and I don’t think anybody knows really. I suppose your boss is someone who would discipline you if you did something wrong - is that right? But there are all sorts of definitions of boss. I would say the person that can hire and fire you maybe that could do that. So in some ways they are, in other ways they are not at all” (19C 6-37).

Clinicians appreciated their multiple clinical and leadership bosses played this to their advantage and how they wish to work as individuals, whilst maintaining credibility in ensuring the needs of all parties are met. “The joy of this is you have multiple bosses and

you have to balance off what they might want” (38C 7-13). The word *senior* was used during interviews; however, again, dubiety arose as to what this meant. Those fulfilling leadership roles were allegedly senior to those colleagues, yet not perceived as their boss:

“I have very senior colleagues who I would consider my seniors, who are not my managers. I have people in management roles who I would not consider my seniors, so it’s a very odd relationship sometimes” (19C 4-50).

“CSMs start to act like they are our bosses if you like...because most of us wouldn’t see CSM as our senior, so most of us would see a clinician as our senior, and that clinician is in a temporary job, who will not always be our senior and will come back to being a clinician for someone else to take over that role” (19C 6-30).

However, it is perhaps down to clinicians’ increased intellectual prowess that leads them to not appreciate those less qualified than them as their boss:

“Sometimes nurse managers, who to be frank are not the same intellectual level as doctors. You get nurses who are promoted way beyond their capabilities and suddenly put in charge of certain things and they think they’re your boss” (14C 6-3).

Yet paradoxically, consultants appear to ignore other consultant colleagues as their leadership counterparts, sometimes due to their particular speciality or clinical abilities not being ranked as equally medically valuable as their own:

“Although she is managerially senior to me, clinically, she is a breast radiographer, who looks at mammograms all day, which I wouldn’t think is a particularly senior clinical role. So again you have this mixture - she is managerially my boss, but clinically she is not” (19C 6-12).

This questions their appreciation of who their boss is and whether this has a bearing on how they work. Clinicians appeared to have disparate responses to who they saw as their boss, with others knowing who their boss was, but not necessarily giving respect.

“I work with colleagues; I don’t see anybody as my boss” (32P 5-39).

The political environment dictates councillors are elected by constituents in a community, thus respondents indicated that the people who voted them into office are their ultimate boss:

“The electorate probably because ultimately they are the ones who will make a decision about how well I have done in the role” (65P 3-53).

“The people of [place]. The people in the street” (66P 3-31).

“My public, actually because ultimately it will be them who decide whether I stay in the job or not” (81P 4-20).

There is a sense of ownership and passion using the word *my*. However, there is contention as to whom these political leaders are accountable, leading to questioning whether there is any authority within local government. Some viewed the entire body of councillors as their boss: “Ultimately, power in the council lies with the council” (30P 3-44), whilst others shared the opinion they were their own boss and did not answer to anyone other than themselves, a sentiment shared with academics and clinicians:

“I don’t actually have a boss because I don’t report to anyone officially. There is no one responsible for my development other than myself. I don’t have an appraisal” (31P 5-15).

Similar to academics and clinicians, it depended what situation arose as to who they were responsible to and for: “I suppose what I am really saying is that you’ve got various bosses, depending on which hat you’re seen to be wearing” (52P 4-34).

Yet, bearing in mind that councillors are affiliated with different political parties, those in leadership positions are often accountable to their nearest followers and those who take on particular roles within council administration. It would be remiss not to mention that respondents work with colleagues in opposition parties. Even those in political administration are not perceived by counterparts as the people in charge of the council and, further, the responses harnessed doubt from the language used, including *technically*, *clearly* and *theoretically*:

“Theoretically the Leader of the Council is my boss but that doesn’t work because of the political nature. He cannot tell me what to do. He can’t even ask me to do something. If I felt like it, I would say no” (31P 5-16).

“The [political party] group. They technically are because you could get all political and say the electorate so they’re technically your boss” (60P 5-19).

There is also the implication that someone’s length of tenure has a bearing on who people perceive as their boss. Although this candidate is nominally leader of the council, the idea that it is because of their time in post is somewhat concerning.

“Politically in this council the leader of the council who’s led it for 19 years and is clearly the boss” (71P 6-19).

One striking feature throughout responses is that there is a unanimous lack of consistency across sectors of who reports to whom and who leaders perceive as their own leader. This somewhat surprising circumstance raises the question that if no one knows who their leader is, or who they are indeed leading, is there any leadership taking place? If leaders do not know who they are leading, and those people are not readily in receipt of such

leadership, does leadership actually exist or just naturally progress? Once again, this supports the notion of singular versus multiple organizational affiliations perhaps being at play.

Subsequent questions aimed at exposing mechanisms used by leaders to gain cooperation and harmony from reluctant colleagues, including managerial and administrative staff.

#### **4.2.3 Category 3 - Professional Working Issues**

##### **Concept 1 - Collaboration and Collegiality**

This question aimed at determining the relationship candidates had with other groups and how successful they interacted professionally. This included colleagues from other areas, departments and those whom they worked with managerially, and where issues arose.

“There are issues, but there aren’t any issues once you go through those doors that you just came through. When you come through here, as I keep telling my colleagues, it’s an oasis of tranquillity compared to what’s happening on the wards, in A&E” (01C 6-20).

No individual is able to operate in isolation or as a “stand-alone trail blazer” (58C 2-5), so colleagues work together to reach common goals, often requiring degrees of delegation:

“I try and get as many of them to take on different responsibility areas as possible, so that works reasonably well most of the time” (22C 2-16).

“I’ve got a group full of people who are really experienced, really skilled, have great ideas, have experience that I don’t have and I ask them to contribute and bring it to the collective” (10P 9-2).

Questioning hoped to uncover how easily and successfully leaders worked as part of a team. If everyone shared common values and was “like minded” (34C 2-43), leadership was simple.

“Too much of what we do in here is done as a team. There’s not one thing that I could point and say that I have done this and I have done this alone. That’s not the way that this organization can work. It’s always about building a team” (38C 4-9).

A team dynamic relies upon the leader listening to everyone’s opinion to promote inclusion, whilst attempting to reach a compromise. Part of this is “understanding different peoples’ personality styles and ways of working” (03C 4-50) and making sure that “the issues are placed before them in a rational way and allowing them to have their



say in it” (63P 2-36). Ensuring that everyone in the team is subscribing to the same goals is essential to leader success:

“It’s about saying to people look, we are all contributing, but the university is a bigger body than any of us and we’ve got to work to the overall benefit of our university” (47A 3-13).

Having support from within the team is imperative for leader success. This was highlighted as reciprocal, in that the person applying for the job needed support from within their department:

“The first time I was reappointed here, we went back to the department meeting and asked them whether they would support me to reapply, and the answer was yes. I wouldn’t do it otherwise” (00C 9-49).

This can have the adverse effect if the leader is not supported: “I haven’t always felt as supported as I could have been and I don’t think that was people being purposefully neglectful” (76C 4-12), with the perception of “quite isolating and lonely being a clinical lead” (36C 4-34).

It is the job of the leader to reach consensus based on opinions, which means ensuring they understand the problem and potential solutions before taking it to the rest of their team.

“Every decision I made I had to first of all get right in my own mind because it would directly affect the way I work, that made it much easier to sell to my colleagues” (13C 2-55).

“The opinions can be so disparate and some of them are fantastic opinions, but the brilliant ideas don’t necessarily fit with the majority” (15A 2-43).

There are sometimes aspects of the job role that are out of the control of the leader.

“I can directly manage those issues inside the [political party] group more easily, because we’ve got a collective unit. But there’s another collective unit upstairs – the [political party] group. I can’t manage that. I’ve got to depend on my deputy leader managing that” (06P 5-55).

The task of gaining cohesion is made all the more difficult when not working within one’s own area of expertise. This issue is made worse when the leadership role is “not valued” (36 5-15) or is under-appreciated. It can also hinder the advancement of the department if there is a high degree of resistance from individuals or groups of colleagues. Mechanisms designed to combat this will be discussed and analysed later in this chapter:

“The other element of that is that I need to persuade other members of political

groups that they should support the line that we're taking. That's part of my role to have that dialogue particularly with the leaders of the other groups, to ensure that when it gets to council or committee, that we actually have a majority" (63P 2-41).

Maintaining harmony is one aspect of a leader's role that appears hardest to achieve and is more of a balancing act. Too much autonomy can lead to colleagues deviating from aims and objectives, whilst over-guidance can have an equally damaging, negative effect:

"The more you treat people like children and the more you dictate to them what they do, the less ownership they feel, so the less they give back" (28C 2-52).

The above shows treating people the wrong way can lead to them being less likely to do additional favours. To lose such congruence could be catastrophic for an organization:

"Nobody is holding any grudges or personal animosities, so keeping it that way is probably one of my main jobs, because if you lose that, then it's going to be much harder to get anything done" (27A 3-5).

Despite being difficult to work with, it is evident that few people would be able to fulfil their role in isolation. The next section details leader mechanisms to gain compliance from difficult colleagues, and the situations when this is simple, and not so simple to achieve.

## **Concept 2 - Cooperation**

"On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being easy and 10 being difficult, 8.5 or 9, way up there. It's very difficult to get colleagues to do something" (28C 3-32).

Cooperation and methods employed to gain colleague compliance informed this question. Individual agendas obscure people's ability and willingness to do as asked, so assessment of these and how they influence behaviours was pivotal. Responses denoted that cooperation was relatively easy to achieve, and it was interesting to note how respondents thought this was done. Yet others expressed that "it is, without doubt, the hardest thing I do every day. Of course, they're not doing it for me and I genuinely don't see it like that at all" (36C 3-25).

### ***Easy if...***

**Structure** is pivotal in leadership effectiveness: "They understand that there is a leadership and management hierarchy and we've got things that need doing" (45A 3-36). Equally, "the system only works because the people on each rung get on well together, they have to work together" (00C 6-37). This structure can be a retreat position adopted

to gain cooperation:

“In a formal management role where there are clear lines of accountability within an organization ultimately even if your workers don’t respect you, if the staff below you, the staff that you manage don’t respect you, you can still say to them “well you’re doing it because I told you and I’m your line manager and that’s your job and it’s in your job description” (10P 7-37).

This assumption, countered when individuals “don’t want to be managed” (51C 4-7), however, is different from there being a hierarchical structure in place for employees to adhere to. However, “in general, consultants are reasonably willing to do what they’re asked but in a way I think one of the things around medical management is what are you managing?” (11C 4-42). There needs to be a reciprocal appreciation of the leadership function before colleagues and leaders can operate as a team. If both parties appreciate a leadership function needs to be fulfilled, a significant hurdle has been overcome.

Harnessing **engagement** from colleagues must be maintained through winning “their hearts or their heads. I can’t tell them what to do. I can only tell them once and then I’ve lost it” (76C 3-18). Engagement is likely to increase with the appreciation of what the team is striving to achieve, spawning from being “all of an ilk” (02P 5-5) and “broadly of a mind” (26P 3-7):

“There are some that assume I have gone over to the dark side and that I will only speak lies and evil and they are opposed to pretty much anything I say. There are others who understand the context and engage much more easily” (79A 2-26).

“If everybody agrees or if the majority agree that it’s a good thing to do it gets done. If the majority think it isn’t a good thing to do, you’ve got to have a good reason for saying that, so it doesn’t get done” (09P 10-31).

A counter argument is that people cooperate with leader requests “as long as you leave them alone” (08A 3-43). This is a paradox in itself and to the team approach in that people are more willing to engage when they are not actually engaged in the group dynamic.

Emphasis was placed on achieving **goodwill** amongst colleagues, without which it was purported to be almost impossible to get people to do things. This is partly down to the personality and educational qualities of the people being led. Goodwill can stem from appreciating others’ wishes and appealing to their better nature for improvement of the service.

“I think the difficulties are that everything we do relies on goodwill, so it relies on them doing work that is not remunerated in any way and based on their

professional integrity” (19C 4-40).

“You can get a lot of goodwill from clinicians, as long as it’s for the good of patients, good for service or good for training” (57C 3-25).

**Preparation** of an argument, knowing the team with which you are working and having “done the ground work in building a good team” (56A 2-42) go some way to achieving cooperation. **Honesty** featured during responses, with leaders needing to be “as transparent as possible so that there’s nothing going on behind the scenes that people don’t know about” (08A 2-12). Accessibility and amount of **information** shone as an important aspect of gaining colleague cooperation “the sooner they have the information, not necessarily more information” (60P 2-37). Allegedly, “you’ve got troubles” (47A 2-54) should a situation occur if there is a gap in information flow and along with consultation and allowing people to talk, “make good use of evidence to support decision-making” (18A 2-24). This flow of information is related to a “common objective” (31P 2-55) which should be achieved by that team, guided by the leader.

Conflict avoidance plays a massive part in attempting to reach consensus and cooperation. A somewhat “adversarial” (11C 6-20) approach to leadership is rarely effective, with a more tactile method needed:

“The talent is bringing them together and showing them the worth of taking a particular route that might not achieve all of what they’re trying to achieve” (32P 3-19).

Once harmony has been broadly achieved, the team can begin to work toward a common goal, compared to that of a familial dynamic:

“I suppose the only thing I relate this to is like being a parent in a family, this type of managerial role. It’s about trying to keep everyone generally happy, try and control misbehaviour, generally making sure the family functions and people cooperate if you want to think of it that way” (03C 5-33).

### ***Easy when...***

Respecting people’s beliefs, subject area and passion goes a long way in achieving consensus and cooperation. Those disengaged from colleagues are likely to fail in this:

“If I come across as a manager who is just interested in targets, the financial year, student numbers, then there is a lack of credibility” (77A 1-42).

However, this sometimes comes at the expense of what the leader is trying to achieve:

“They’re very, very good as researchers, but often they can’t lift themselves out of their discipline and see the bigger picture” (70A 3-6).

“Doctors, and particularly consultants, are independent people and they are in their pinnacle of their career. Each one has his own idea, has his own ways of doing things and I think you have to respect that and you need to give them a latitude to work towards that” (57C 3-54).

Leaders must value their colleagues’ views in decision-making. Colleagues need to believe “what’s being asked of them is relevant to them and has purpose, then they are more likely to be cooperative and collaborative and get on with it” (62A 2-12). This can develop into colleagues embracing the task and “even then pick it up and lead it themselves” (62A 2-14). Part of this cooperation can be attributed to leaders displaying they can do the tasks themselves, but also about bestowing trust upon others to help them concentrate on more pressing issues:

“You have to earn the respect, you have to demonstrate that you’re worthy of being listened to and then being responded to” (10P 7-35).

This individual freedom and autonomy are significant themes proposed in the data and essential aspects of getting people to do as asked. There are many reasons to support this notion, including the fact that “academics are professionally argumentative – that’s how they’re trained” (18A 4-55) who will “very critically deconstruct it [your idea], without necessarily offering positive suggestions at how we might reconstitute or revise the proposal” (18A 4-56). Further, this engrained culture spans across sectors, with clinicians being “bred from an early age that if you want to be a doctor, that your ultimate aim is to be a consultant in your speciality. Therefore, it is very difficult to see how anyone can tell you what to do” (51C 4-15). In politics, there is not the same emphasis on autonomous working, as each political party has a manifesto to adhere to. Each time a decision is reached, even those who oppose must back the majority. This does not mean there are no independent opinions and conflicts arising; however, they are contractually obliged to fall in line with the majority decision.

If people are continually challenged in their roles, with leaders taking interest in development and progression, cooperation is heightened:

“People use expressions like the devil makes work for idle hands. But that’s correct. If high achievers suddenly have no more goals, then a lot of them will express their frustration, which to an outsider appears to be bad behaviour” (13C 4-16).

### ***Difficult when...***

This section highlights difficulties experienced by leaders in attempting to exert

influence. If leaders fail to show willingness and ability to carry out tasks, and fail to display “leadership as opposed to management intent and leadership by demonstrating by doing and showing” (82A 3-49), there is little chance things would get done:

“If I am asking equally qualified people, I also have to demonstrate that I am equally willing and able to do the tasks that I am asking them to do. It’s about sharing fairness and equity is largely the way that you would convince them to do it” (61A 4-5).

This is not to say what was being asked will be done well or better than other candidates. However, as previously mentioned, no department or function can operate in isolation:

“If you ask people to do them, they get on and do them. They don’t always do them well – sometimes they are not capable of doing them well” (45A 3-37).

“I have some amazingly bright colleagues, brighter than me. I don’t think they’re as good at managing as I am or as good at strategy as I am” (70A 3-5).

However, this can have an adverse effect on team working, in that the more leadership and control exerted, the more disenfranchised and disengaged people become.

“Academics...have been highly self-motivated, highly self-disciplined people who have a vocation, which is sometimes misunderstood, misused, abused by management...In my experience, the more you try to tell people what to do, especially people of a certain seniority, the less chance you’ll have that’ll work” (80A 2-53).

### ***Reasons for being difficult***

There are many contextual reasons to colleague reluctance; however, similar themes emerged. Having trained for so long, academics and clinicians are the most qualified people in their field and are removed from the bigger picture and why they should fulfil a role for wider benefit. If a task includes something related to a person’s subject area, “they’ll normally do it without any necessary persuasion” (19C 2-32); however, if not, professionals are well versed in being able to “back up their opinions with cogent arguments and are not always amenable to arbitration either. They are right and everybody else is wrong” (58C 2-34). Further:

“There are, in academia, a lot of selfish people around. I do think a lot of people are self-centred; they’re only in it for themselves and they’re not interested in helping, in doing things for other colleagues” (78A 3-43).

“If someone is a service manager, they’ll think there may be 5,000 people in Scotland who can do your job, but there are only five or six who can do my job” (14C 6-11).

Politicians often have different politically-driven beliefs; therefore, ignorance of others' opinions is common. Yet, the mechanism in place to combat this is towing the party line and agreeing to disagree, with naysayers having to be content with the majority decision reached.

“We have a group whip so we come to a democratic decision within our group. Quite often that's a unanimous decision but there will be times when there are differences of opinion” (65P 2-23).

Gaining cooperation from colleagues is difficult when there is a peer as leader. However, there were instances where candidates did not see themselves as being different from others; rather, more equal to the people they were leading. The next section reflects this idea.

### **Concept 3 - Primus Inter Pares**

“It is straightforward: I am the same as everybody else here” (00C 7-28).

Originating from the Latin phrase, meaning first amongst equals, this highlights leaders as the same as those they are leading and that they work together with to reach common expectations, with some denoting this as a “facilitator to improve quality” (16C 4-7). One individual has been singled out as being suitable for a leadership role within that team. Use of absolute language including “have to be” (78A 4-29) reinforces the appreciation by the person in charge that they are omnipotent and not able to fulfil their role on their own and require input from everyone.

This has to be a mutual assumption; however, with those in the team seeing the person in charge as equal to them, and the leader is “not above the rest of them” (52P 3-19): “The most important thing from the beginning is to recognize that you are the same as them” (00C 8-50); “You're working with them, not against them” (16C 4-8). There is obviously going to be an understanding that they are the person in charge: “I am essentially in the same position that they are although, formally, I am doing this managerial role” (33C 3-33). Part of this relies upon the leader being able to “demonstrate unequivocally that you're not just making the decisions” (14C 5-55) and “lead from the front” (78A 4-30).

Despite these references, leaders still find it increasingly difficult to get colleagues to do things for them. This potentially leads to contentious situations and conflict arising due to differences of opinion. The next section highlights experiences of conflict that arose during data collection.

#### Concept 4 - Conflict

“If you can spot the problem as early as possible and solve it while it’s a small conflict, rather than let it fester into a large one, then that is a very important thing” (47A 3-47).

Conflict can arise from pressure of working with colleagues and especially with multiple personalities. These situations can be created purposely when “someone is way out of line” (03C 5-39) and “sometimes has to happen” (03C 5-40) or manifest as a result of others’ action or non-action. They can be adequately dealt with, and it is down to the leader to suitably extinguish, or “disarm” (63P 2-22) harmful individuals before they become problematic. Conflict avoidance arose during interviews, with respondents reporting that there was not much use in conflict other than diverting attention away from the problem and stifling a solution. Conflict will divert attention away from the work that individuals should be focusing on:

“It’s about choosing your battles really isn’t it? I certainly have had some confrontations with people but it ends up with neither party being particularly happy generally and often doesn’t really lead to any resolution” (03C 4-6).

Further pre-emptive, anticipatory action can stop conflict, with leaders thinking ahead to whom might cause problems and planning a strategy to deal with that particular situation:

“You try to avoid challenge, rather than confront it. You try to head it off at the pass. You try to work in partnership” (67A 2-22).

“What I’ve learnt to do is anticipate. I suppose one thing I have learnt in the management jobs I have done is I’ve learned very quickly to anticipate where the hot spots are and to address them before things go out for consultation. I can almost predict who will say what in relation to a paper” (70A 4-39).

Tackling such situations with equally obstructive belligerence can have the opposite to the desired effect, so was indicated as not appropriate:

“I think that if you meet conflict with conflict, it will just escalate and just become unmanageable” (16C 2-37).

Negativity aside, conflict can be positive in extracting the most appropriate, deliberated solution, despite the potential to “fall out over it...provided it’s managed” (31P 3-5), involving people in decision-making and allowing “people to work it out for themselves” (43C 2-47). This can be using people’s ideas, with individuals considering the most appropriate option:

“I’d probably spend a bit of time thinking about that because we’ve worked quite as a group and I would say we’re just quite open and democratic. So whenever there’s been a conflict in the group we’ve had an open debate and if it came to a



vote then it's came to a vote" (42P 3-17).

More insidiously, a final decision-maker may make the other party feel as if they have made an impact in decision-making when, in fact, they may have simply been made to feel better by venting their frustrations:

"You have to be able to manage that conflict with your constituent in such a way they go away feeling that they've achieved something" (20P 12-1).

There are some instances where disputes are outside someone's control and influence, yet it is the responsibility of the leader to sort it out whether they wish to or not.

"I have an altercation at the moment between the oncologists and the radiologists to deal with and because I am the only person that knows both parties, I am the person who is left to deal with an argument which, on a clinical basis isn't really my argument, but it's under the cancer umbrella and there's no one else on site who has that as their remit" (39C 2-3).

Setting aside conflict, reluctance to authority or sheer belligerence, leaders can employ tactics to appease individuals and obtain things. The next section considers these, along with last resort sanctions that can be used when necessary.

#### **4.2.4 Category 4 - Methods to Management**

##### **Concept 1 - Persuasion**

"I suppose it partly depends on what you're trying to get them to do" (18A 3-38).

This section details tactics to abate obstructive behaviour, reluctance to comply and gain respect, allowing leaders to seek colleague cooperation. People being led "don't like being told what to do, but can be persuaded" (24A 3-5), and it's partly about being well equipped and "having that emotional intelligence" (69P 2-35) of the situation beforehand. "It's not easy getting folk to do things unless they want to do them" (12C 2-10), with "no power, predominantly" (28C 3-37) being noted as an overriding propagating factor. Aside from uncontested cooperation, convincing people "that we are all on the same side" (08A 2-22) and "understanding what motivates people, what really drives them" (13C 4-33) are key in gaining respect and getting things done through others. With no mechanisms to say "hey, I'm your boss, go and do this" (00C 7-41), leaders continually require innovative, tailored methods to get things done "in an amicable way" (30P 2-24).

Getting people to do things was highlighted as simpler when the task concerned someone's subject area, or the person asking showed interest in their follower's discipline.

"If you bump into an academic on the way to a meeting and ask how things are going, and they say really not good, I am so busy. And you say to them how is the research going. They will say fantastic – I've just had this paper accepted and their whole disposition changes. He was arguing that although people might moan, actually, if you get them talking about aspects of their professional role, they lighten up and everything's wonderful" (18A 4-44).

Coupled with this is the view that individuals in these roles are often selfishly focused on themselves and what they want, rather than considering the institution, as the leader has to:

"Their loyalty is to their subject matter – it isn't to whatever university they happen to be in" (77A 2-1).

"I think giving people the opportunity to have their say and to make them aware that their views are as valid as the person sitting next to them and encouraging them to take part" (31P 3-18).

With this in mind, there is a negotiating aspect to the role of leader:

"When it's people who are absolutely against what I am suggesting, I would explain the position and situation and I will usually look for a trade-off" (56A 3-2).

People have reasons for being reluctant in situations and everyone's viewpoint should be important to group discussions, as not everyone will consider everything.

"Collectively, the whole council don't have a monopoly on wisdom, but you're more likely to get a better decision if you can get a consensual decision among a wider group of people" (05P 6-30).

"The best way I find with people who perhaps misunderstand what's actually been taking place is to try to disarm them as quickly as possible and I think you develop that attitude and stance through experience" (63P 2-21).

Proposing benefits to reluctant individuals and those who cause problems can stifle the likelihood for conflict. However, this information must make sense to the person who you are giving it to and ensure they feel involved in the decision-making:

"Taking care to present those data in ways which are accessible to the audience. I wouldn't go in with a load of stats to the English & Modern Languages Department for example. Appropriate use of graphs and so on to help make the case for change and help people understand some quite difficult decisions" (18A 2-14).

"The approach that I could take as a HoD at [location], I could not take in very

gentile [location]. That's by virtue of the kind of personalities and temperament and characteristics of the staffing group. It's very much having to take the temperature" (82A 4-8).

"You need to make sure they feel engaged in the process of developing your manifesto and have joint ownership" (05P 5-48).

Alongside honesty, "verbal communication is vitally important" (64A 4-19). Yet, a leader cannot plan for follower belligerence. They need to go in with a negative outlook and think positively. It is as if they are resigned to face negativity from what they ask people to do, and this inferred reluctance highlights this pre-discussion negativity:

"I've never had any difficulty in getting people to do things, but clearly getting people to do things is not necessarily the same as changing their minds" (45A 3-1).

"You can't tell people to do anything. Change has to be consensual and I suppose that's one of the things I learnt earliest. You're only going to change anything as fast as the slowest person involved is prepared to change" (39C 3-9).

In a group situation, some are reticent in coming forward with individual viewpoints which conflict with the general consensus. There is an element of stoicism that leaders will struggle to overcome, which could result from being bored and insufficiently challenged:

"A couple of golden rules I try and hold in my head, don't always manage it successfully, but I generally believe that people do things with the best of intentions. They are doing something for them, feels like the right reasons. I endeavour to understand what their beliefs are, that this aligns with what I am asking them to do" (50A 3-11).

The use of reliable, predictable colleagues can help gain group consensus, together with taking reluctant parties aside and trying to solve problems. This dedication can be time consuming, but of eventual cooperative benefit long term:

"Peer pressure is good too. If you get a few people on board, the early adopters on board, and eventually, that helps, if everyone else is doing it" (12C 2-28).

"Sometimes people will take a position in a large group and sometimes what we need to have is an offline conversation. Sometimes, you need to understand what their fears or concerns about a particular course of action might be and they may well have a perception that you're not going in the right direction" (38C 4-22).

Some situations call for a shock factor for a leader to provoke reactions from colleagues. They need to present the truth to them of what is happening and why something needs to change:

"You can present the burning platform, the bare facts, the uncomfortable truth,

the stark reality of what needs to be done and for why. If things are really good, then it's easy to persuade people" (72A 2-37).

"I tend to use the tax payer sitting on my shoulder analogy, if I am trying to push something through. We need to be transparent; we need to be able to say if someone from the general public walked through here and asked questions, would we be able to justify what we're doing?" (01C 2-45).

By far the most profound example of getting people to do things for you and finding out their reluctances was proposed by an academic:

"My favourite question to ask is the magic wand question, which I use as part of the persuasion technique...I actually have a magic wand that I carry about in my bag...I often get my magic wand out and just say if you could make this happen with three wishes of my magic wand, what would you have? Nine times out of ten, people ask for extremely simple things, which you can give them immediately" (68A 3-7).

## **Concept 2 - Sanction**

"You're almost unsackable. Pretty much got to shag a patient" (28C 5-2).

With cooperation difficult to achieve, leaders may implement sanctions to punish those not conforming. However, dealing with individuals with scarce skillsets, can leaders enforce sanctions? Interviewees reported that "poor performance can go on for years and nothing happens" (17C 6-35), whilst others highlighted sanction in other organizations as being routine if individuals did not adequately perform: "If you don't deliver, you're out of the door" (29A 3-30). Coupled with this, financial sanctions are available in other organizations, with underperformance resulting in salary adjustments: "If people underperform, they don't get paid as much" (13C 7-32). However, this can prove difficult when positions are not financially rewarded: "I would almost go as far as to say there's zero ability to sanction people, I don't know how our group would deal with that situation, it would be incredibly awkward" (42P 6-44). Having a title does not necessarily incur financial benefit, nor does it imply power and authority. There are other factors dictating levels of power and authority an individual has over colleagues. "It is a mismatch, in terms of power and responsibility, because direct financial reward is not available" (13C 5-56).

There is the option of using professional bodies should there be instances of gross misconduct. They ensure compliance and enforce rigour and consistency throughout professions.

"I think we've all seen colleagues who have ended up in the clutches of those professional bodies [General Dental and Medical Councils] for having not done

very much and I think people probably do need to be a bit more reflective and think well if someone is disagreeing with me, am I right. It's not that I wouldn't always say I was right" (22C 5-24).

Due to the nature of the jobs, there is an increased difficulty in firing people because of the highly specialist tasks they are doing. This air of superiority can lead to complacency and a perception of elitism.

"It's very difficult to hire and fire within professional groups in medicine. I am not saying that that would be the solution to it all, but you are dealing with highly motivated, highly intelligent individuals within an environment where they are highly skilled, they're difficult to replace" (04C 4-47).

Further, to replace such highly specialized individuals would be problematic and time consuming. This leads to an increased sense of exclusivity and of being untouchable, with other industries having a greater ability to monitor staff performance.

"There isn't large numbers of skilled, qualified doctors available to step into some of these very specific roles, so senior doctors are to some extent protected from some of the pressures that you would find in other industries" (04C 4.52).

A suggestion to combat this is that jobs should be competitively interviewed to weed out those not fulfilling their roles properly and to bring a fresh perspective to the environment.

"I don't know if anyone has ever been sacked, but in theory, they could do. It would be good actually if it was competitively interviewed [for leadership roles] every three years, I think" (13C 1-50).

The inability to sanction is not only prevalent in the highly professional environments, making it difficult for those in leadership positions to coordinate and control what colleagues are doing.

"There's absolutely nothing in the way of sanctions that you can reasonably apply. The majority of the group, so let's say nine out of 14, all of who have lived within the past regime whereby when you're the administration - the sanction that you have got is the financial sanction effectively to actually move people in and out of positions where there's additional payments or responsibility" (23P 5-12).

There may be greater opportunities to enforce financial sanctions; however, this may not deter people from being difficult and obstructive, as the majority of political positions are not financially motivated. Complacency may play a part in the attitudes people display toward their leader if they know there are few or no enforceable sanctions. There are challenges faced when working with others, both organizational and personal, which will be explored next.

#### **4.2.5 Category 5 - Challenges**

##### **Concept 1 - Working with Others**

“Rather than being a shrinking violet and going back into your shell, come out and lead from the front and all will be well” (78A 4-46).

When working with a diverse range of individuals in high pressure situations, conflict will arise. This section details the challenges leaders face when working with personalities.

Individuals have reasons for wanting to retain professional autonomy, as any sign of weakness may mean loss of control. Those individuals have been described as “very opinionated and very well communicated” (55A 2-41). Thus, an appreciation of people’s area of specialization is important, as this will increase levels of engagement amongst colleagues and leaders. Coupled with this is the increased analytical stance that highly intellectual people will take in situations. Therefore, it is important “to have a good answer to their queries” because “it is more difficult to flannel them” (50A 3-13). Leaders are dealing with those passionate about their subject, thus it is important to understand this before making a decision:

“It’s always difficult because I think when people enter into a political arena it’s because they generally feel very passionate about what they’re trying to do” (65P 3-12).

There is also the element of choice with these unique roles. In other hierarchical structures, if you are instructed to do something by your leader, you do it. However, professionals have the choice of whether they do as they are asked. Colleague perception plays a part in how people act and this has a subsequent influence on how the organization reacts to certain situations.

“The academic community sees itself as a self-regulated community, and not one that is open to explicit management” (70A 3-29).

“The biggest challenge is the fact that they can say, no - I don’t want to do that...I am using drug X because that is what I think is best for my patients. So clinical freedom is a big challenge” (01C 4-17).

With so many personalities, experience and opinions, complete control of those you are leading is impossible; “You’re never going to have overall control, or it’s going to be more difficult to have overall control” (02P 2-2). Somewhat ironically in an attempt to gain influence amongst colleagues, one politician strongly advised to “leave the politics,

to some extent, at the door of the meeting and recognize that we've all got a contribution to make" (05P 6-40).

## **Concept 2 - Organizational**

"Money to oil the wheels is undoubtedly a great asset" (47A 3-28).

Working with individuals has proved challenging, however, as can working within organizational boundaries. Respondents were asked about these and how they overcame obstacles to retain focus. Overlap occurred between personal and organizational challenges; however, themes of differing personalities and opinions were common:

"A university is like a mini society – we've got solicitors, we've got accountants and, yes, we all work for a university but they've all got their own backgrounds and styles and their own systems" (68A 3-24).

"Academia is quite an unusual mix of creativity and trying to align people at the same time to a common goal or vision. That is quite a challenge, because what academics don't want to be is managed. They don't want to be managed" (84A 2-54).

Financial restrictions transpired as common amongst institutional players, none more so than politicians, who are inevitably accountable to tax payers.

"We're restricted by the budget we get from the UK. In days gone past local authorities were probably awash with money and they could splash it on anything that they wanted actually and we have come at a time as all these things were kicking in" (20P 3-1).

"I think we're put in a position all the time now of having to justify whereas at one time when there was more money around the savings and savings required each year weren't as big and millions and millions and millions in efficiency savings, which were really in the office mainly" (26P 2-3).

## **Concept 3 - Personal**

"Once you've got the title of the job, you are suddenly expected to perform a lot of things, and you suddenly get bombarded with emails from people who you never knew existed" (48C 4-51).

One aspect left under-appreciated is personal circumstances and how this may affect or be affected by the roles people fulfil professionally. This includes sacrifices they may have made:

"You still need to be an academic. I still have to do my research. I still supervise PGR students. I do very little teaching, but I do smidgeons of teaching" (50A 4-33).

People took on leadership roles to the detriment of their original, often passion-led careers. This, coupled with being “massively underprepared” (80A 3-56) for leadership roles, can lead to isolation, negative perceptions of the job and general personal and group dissatisfaction. This lack of preparation was commonplace throughout sectors, with some putting it down to the fact that “managers speak a different language” and that their “priorities are different” (83C 3-29). This was supported with one respondent suggesting that issues could be resolved through “more training, or an incentivization” (30P 3-29). Equally, the lack of a definitive job role description leads to confusion: “Until you are actually in that position, you cannot possibly know what it’s going to involve” (44P 3.41). Also, colleagues often fail to “understand what we do and I don’t think they understand the cost and I don’t think they understand how difficult it is” (76C 3-24). Their ultimate and often immediate supposition is that the person has the title and that they are paid for doing it, so it is their job to simply get on with it.

### ***4.3 Linking to Distributed Leadership***

Table 2.9 demonstrates seven key characteristics of DL, with the proceeding section re-examining the data presented above exploring examples of how distributed leadership remains insufficient in answering the questions posed.

#### **4.3.1 Accessibility**

Readiness of parties and the ability to engage in leadership form the basis of this. In a lot of cases, leaders revealed that they would not be able to fulfil their function without contribution from numerous colleagues from a broad range of specific areas. However, sometimes, organizational structures precluded the ability of others without formal authority from engaging in the leadership process.

#### **4.3.2 Action and Task Focussed**

This situation sees leadership perceived as a combination of performance of tasks, distribution and as a matter of actions, which combine towards achieving a common goal or set of agreed outcomes or expectations.

#### **4.3.3 Blurred Lines**

Without clear, defined boundaries and reporting structures, staff get confused as to whom they report to, and if appropriate, who reports to them. This happens throughout all levels



of a hierarchical structure if clarity is not given. A lack of consistency throughout institutions may perhaps highlight the issue in that there are no clear guidelines despite it, in most cases, being made clear through a formal hierarchical structure.

#### **4.3.4 Conflict**

Personalities, experience and leadership styles contribute to why conflicts erupt amongst professionals. Organizational disagreements will always occur, and individual personalities can go some way to explaining the reasons for this. However, despite operating in the highly professional environments discussed above, and broadly working towards common goals, there remains contention between these factions; an additional burden for any leader.

#### **4.3.5 Heroic Figure Person**

A role may not be able to be solely fulfilled by one individual; it may still be the perception that the person with the title of leader is omnipotent and has ultimate power and authority. However, if followers are not engaged with the idea, then they will have no one to lead or manage.

#### **4.3.6 Individual Expertise**

It is rare to find a leader who is able to fulfil all aspects of their role by themselves, without input from other professional and specialist colleagues. Even if colleagues are not as experienced in the area of the leader, they may have prior expertise in dealing with a particular situation or may have been the past leader and be able to offer advice.

#### **4.3.7 Multiple Leaders**

Although various departments and institutions are involved in service delivery in each sector, and they contribute to the overall running of the organization, there is ambiguity as to whether this constitutes an explicit leadership function, or whether they are simply contributory factors.

#### **4.3.8 Summary**

With the above characteristics harbouring broadly similar tendencies, Table 4.3 summarizes these headings, with additional data in the final column detailing how these do not constitute an adequate explanation in the contexts explored.

Evidence from the Data Collected	Theme from Literature	Further Explanation
<p>“The academic community sees itself as a self-regulated community, and not one that is open to explicit management. I think I do have executive authority over a whole range of matters, but I wouldn’t say that my colleagues and hope my colleagues would say that I am a partner and someone who is trying to support them in achieving common outcomes and strategies. I am not somebody who is trying to manage in an executive way, and what I mean by that is telling them what to do” (70A 3-29).</p>	Accessibility	Leadership should not be confined to those who have a title and should consider mutuality, with all levels of a hierarchy able to exert leadership and influence decisions.
<p>“The drain on time of doing relatively routine tasks that just have to be done, but doesn’t require much skill or intuition or anything to do them. Making what I would think of as important decisions, I find that quite rewarding, but filling up forms or replying to silly questionnaires or sending a document to somebody they’re never going to do anything other than stick in a filing cabinet, whether it’s electronically or otherwise these days, there’s quite a bit of that which is not very satisfying” (07A 2-54).</p> <p>“It’s generated opportunities that I didn’t anticipate and I didn’t know would come along at the time I was first elected and it’s been very exciting for me personally. But it’s also allowed me to build on that vision and add to the motivation and all those leadership tasks that I have to do” (10P 6-43).</p>	Action and Task Focussed	Perceiving leadership as a combination of performance of tasks, distribution and as a matter of actions.
<p>“When I started out in academia, nobody explained these things to me. I guess you pick them up by osmosis or something, but there was very little management. There was very little person management with anybody saying what their expectations of you were or what you should be trying to achieve. There’s a lot more management than there used to be in terms of line management” (07A 3-51).</p> <p>“As leader of the council you’re in that space between management and leadership politically and leadership with the management” (60P 2-27).</p> <p>“I suppose in some respects, I have various bosses in that, to do with group matters, it is the group leader who holds sway” (52P 4-25).</p>	Blurred Lines	Leadership boundaries are unclear, emergent and open.
<p>“It’s probably outwith our department, because we interface with almost everybody and so we interface with general medicine” (46C 3-34).</p> <p>“I have an altercation at the moment between the oncologists and the radiologists to deal with and because I am the only person that knows both parties” (39C 2-3).</p>	Conflict	Power struggles and conflict manifest in teams, with contention arising from interaction of individuals.
<p>“I think if you can get people’s confidence and trust that you can get things done, and then people will work with you” (37C 3-4).</p>	Heroic Figure	Seeing the ultimate role of leadership as being fulfilled by one responsible person as a heroic figure.
<p>“I try and get as many of them to take on different responsibility areas as possible, so that works reasonably well most of the time” (22C 2-16).</p>	Individual Expertise	Various degrees and variety of expertise distributed across many people, questioning if one person can actually lead.
<p>“I am a representative of a group rather than an authority figure. I go to my colleagues for their ideas on how we can do stuff and then you get a whole sea of those and what I do is sort of crystallize them into a definable notion” (28C 3-46).</p> <p>“I would encourage people to work in teams and have a representative from each team with each team reporting to each other in a sort of oligarchical fashion, rather than a hierarchical fashion” (28C 4-27).</p>	Multiple Leaders	Leadership involves interacting with others, with subsequent redistribution of power and authority and everyone performing a leadership function.

**Table 4.3 Emergent Themes from DL Literature with Data Analysis Input**

## ***4.4 Conclusion***

This chapter explored the data collected and related it to the DL literature. Following coding of the raw data, it was then divided into sub-categories, of which some consisted of multiple concepts. The latter part of the chapter related the data collected to the literature, with Table 4.3 providing a succinct illustration to summarise in one place the data collected and how it relates to the literature that we explored in chapter 2. The proceeding section will take this and other sections together in discussing its applicability and contribution to this thesis.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, linkages between the project's findings and the extant literature will be made in order to reach the research project's aim which, as a reminder, was to answer:

How is distributed leadership operationalized in low-authority settings?

Discussion of the three contributions, summarized below, to DL theorizing will follow.

1. DL, as conceptualized to date, has not yet accounted for the particular characteristics of low-authority settings
2. Specifically, the data presented here suggest that low-authority settings are inhabited by individuals who have multiple organizational loyalties
3. DL, as conceptualized to date, tends not to problematize reciprocity in the distribution of leadership tasks

**Table 5.1 Thesis Contributions**

A pluralist reading of organizational contexts shows individuals may have a more complex account of the organizations to which they feel some allegiance and, therefore, leaders are required to consider this reciprocity issue when they are making their leadership decisions. Within low-authority environments, there is an appreciation that an individual may be a member of more than one organization (e.g., employer, professional body, family, etc.), however, this has subsequently uncovered challenges to leadership and being able to effect leadership upon followers within that environment.

Table 5.2 reminds us of the overarching DL themes together with data to highlight inconsistencies. The final column highlights evidence from the data collected which substantiates how these popular and recurring themes actually do not transpire in real life, and that within low-authority environments, leadership is indeed challenging when attempting to effect change amongst peers. For academia and healthcare, this could potentially be apportioned to being highly skilled, qualified individuals, however, this does not account for the local government setting analysed. Although those within local government do not necessarily need to achieve a minimum requirement to enter, their leadership environment mimics that of academia and healthcare, in that they are leading peers, alongside potential leadership predecessors and successors. The subsequent section of this chapter will detail the contributions made to DL as a body of theory, followed by an overall concluding reflection chapter.

Theme	Explanation	From Findings
Accessibility	Leadership should not be confined to those who have a title and should consider mutuality, with all levels of a hierarchy able to exert leadership and influence decisions.	“The academic community sees itself as a self-regulated community, and not one that is open to explicit management. I think I do have executive authority over a whole range of matters, but I wouldn’t say that to my colleagues and hope my colleagues would say that I am a partner and someone who is trying to support them in achieving common outcomes and strategies. I am not somebody who is trying to manage in an executive way, and what I mean by that is telling them what to do” (70A 3-29).
Action and Task Focused	Perceiving leadership as a combination of performance of tasks, distribution and as a matter of actions.	<p>“The drain on time of doing relatively routine tasks that just have to be done, but doesn’t require much skill or intuition or anything to do them. Making what I would think of as important decisions, I find that quite rewarding, but filling up forms or replying to silly questionnaires or sending a document to somebody they’re never going to do anything other than stick in a filing cabinet, whether it’s electronically or otherwise these days, there’s quite a bit of that which is not very satisfying” (07A 2-54).</p> <p>“It’s generated opportunities that I didn’t anticipate and I didn’t know would come along at the time I was first elected and it’s been very exciting for me personally. But it’s also allowed me to build on that vision and add to the motivation and all those leadership tasks that I have to do” (10P 6-43).</p>
Blurred Lines	Leadership boundaries are unclear, emergent and open.	<p>“When I started out in academia, nobody explained these things to me. I guess you pick them up by osmosis or something, but there was very little management. There was very little person management with anybody saying what their expectations of you were or what you should be trying to achieve. There’s a lot more management than there used to be in terms of line management” (07A 3-51).</p> <p>“As leader of the council you’re in that space between management and leadership politically and leadership with the management” (60P 2-27).</p> <p>“I suppose in some respects, I have various bosses, in that to do with group matters, it is the group leader who holds sway” (52P 4-25).</p>
Conflict	Power struggles and conflict manifest in teams, with contention arising from interaction of individuals.	<p>“It’s probably outwith our department, because we interface with almost everybody and so we interface with general medicine” (46C 3-34).</p> <p>“I have an altercation at the moment between the oncologists and the radiologists to deal with because I am the only person that knows both parties” (39C 2-3).</p>
Heroic Figure	Seeing the ultimate role of leadership as being fulfilled by one responsible person as a heroic figure.	“I think if you can get people’s confidence and trust that you can get things done, and then people will work with you” (37C 3-4).
Individual Expertise	Various degrees and variety of expertise distributed across many people, questioning if one person can actually lead.	“I try and get as many of them to take on different responsibility areas as possible, so that works reasonably well most of the time” (22C 2-16).
Multiple Leaders	Leadership involves interacting with others, with subsequent redistribution of power and authority and everyone performing a leadership function.	<p>“I am a representative of a group rather than an authority figure. I go to my colleagues for their ideas on how we can do stuff and then you get a whole sea of those and what I do is sort of crystallize them into a definable notion” (28C 3-46).</p> <p>“I would encourage people to work in teams and have a representative from each team with each team reporting to each other in a sort of oligarchical fashion, rather than a hierarchical fashion” (28C 4-27).</p>

**Table 5.2 Emergent Themes from DL Literature with Data Analysis Input**

## **5.2 Contributions**

### **5.2.1 DL, as conceptualized to date, has not yet accounted for the particular characteristics of low-authority settings**

The research sought to investigate how leaders in low-authority work with peers, alongside coping with multiple organizational identities. Professionals often do not see themselves as being part of the same organization as their leader, who is usually a peer or colleague. Following a thorough review of existing DL literature, it was confirmed that there is a lack of consensus over the definition of DL (Bolden et al., 2008). This problem was exacerbated by the conflation between viewing one person as a heroic figure (Gronn, 2009a) and everyone leading (Harris, 2007). DL had received attention within secondary education (Spillane et al., 2003, 2004; Harris, 2007; Robinson, 2008; Currie et al., 2009) and healthcare (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Fitzgerald et al., 2013) however, these were not initially identified as low-authority settings. It has become apparent from a combination of the literature search and analysis that these environments, due to their high skill and professional autonomy levels, are deemed as low-authority. Further, DL as a concept in such public service organizations is described as appealing to “multiple goals, less pronounced managerial authority and presence of powerful professional groups” (Currie et al., 2009, p.1735). In contrast, local government was an interesting blend of professional autonomy coupled with collective accountability and proved pivotal to the data collection.

Data highlighted that gaining cooperation from colleagues within low-authority was difficult which, according to the literature, should not be the case. DL is designed to facilitate the redistribution of power and authority throughout an organization; however, this does not seem to be working to achieve team collegiality and cooperation:

“On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being easy and 10 being difficult, 8.5 or 9, way up there. It’s very difficult to get colleagues to do something” (28C 3-32).

In more hierarchical organizations, structure can be relied upon to remind leaders and followers of official channels of reporting and responsibility, however, this is more fluid within low-authority settings, with the redistribution of power and authority questioned.

“In a formal management role where there are clear lines of accountability within an organization ultimately even if your workers don’t respect you, if the staff below you, the staff that you manage don’t respect you, you can still say to them “well you’re doing it because I told you and I’m your line manager and that’s your job and it’s in your job description” (10P 7-37).

### **5.2.2 Specifically, the data presented here suggests that low-authority settings are inhabited by individuals who have multiple organizational loyalties**

The data analysis, informed by extant literature, highlighted a deficiency and oversight in low-authority environments in that there is a universal assumption that only one organizational membership exists. This could, in part, be apportioned to an increase in disaffection between clinicians and healthcare leaders (Davies & Harrison, 2003), together with a reduction in academic autonomy (Coates et al., 2009) and a general reluctance to accept managerialism (Bolden et al., 2008), which has led to multiple organizational membership. Together with this is the lack of reciprocity in the leader / follower relationship.

“The difficulty with consultants is that we are employed by the health board to deliver certain aspects of a service, but actually my line management structure goes to the GMC (General Medical Council)” (00C 2-28).

“Their loyalty is to their subject matter – it isn’t to whatever university they happen to be in” (77A 2-1).

In fact, professionals frequently perceive themselves as members of multiple organizations, including the one paying their salary and a professional regulatory body. Data further exposed that these organizational affiliations can sometimes be three-fold, inclusive of an employment organization, an independent representative body and some form of voluntary membership.

From research conducted around leadership behaviours, people are not willing to engage in leadership processes, or do not see themselves as being led at all. Original heroic leader reliance (Gronn, 2009a) upon a direct reporting structure is contested in this instance. DL literature intended for leadership behaviours to occur in a singular organization, however, in low-authority, overlooked the fact that there may be more than one organization in play. Within singular organizations, people take an almost heroic view of leadership, which is dispersed amongst players in the organization. Leadership is not happening because there are a multitude of organizations within the nominally singular one. Confusion overrules once there is more than one organizational affiliation in conflict with another.

“The management structure here has really not got an awful lot to do with me if I behave as a reasonable doctor, and I treat my patients, it doesn’t matter what the management structure here thinks. So it’s a strange process” (00C 2-45).

### 5.2.3 DL, as conceptualized to date, tends not to problematize reciprocity in the distribution of leadership tasks

Gronn (2000, 2002a, b) alludes that DL is effective because it produces concertive action, meaning people working collaboratively. Yet this reciprocal relationship only works on the premise that leaders are willing to distribute elements of leadership to others within the organization, and those followers are willing recipients of delegation. DL was commended, and the notion of reciprocity was investigated by Gunter and Ribbins (2003, p132):

“While distributed leadership tends to be seen as normatively a good thing, it has also been contested...most notably because of the complexities of who does the distribution and who is in receipt of distribution.”

However, despite paying heed to those individuals in receipt of the distribution of leadership, failure to explore individual acceptance of leadership distribution means doubt and a theoretical gap remained. Table 5.3 illustrates Gronn’s (2002a) forms of practical engagement alongside empirical evidence supporting DL not being sufficient and accounting for the lack of reciprocity in low-authority environments.

Form of Practical Engagement (Gronn, 2002a, p.430)	Example(s) of lack of reciprocity
<u>Spontaneous collaboration</u> <i>Planned</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget meetings</li> <li>• Staff appraisals</li> </ul> <i>Unplanned</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crises</li> <li>• Major problems</li> </ul>	<p>“They quite often do what they always want to do, which is head down, blinkers on, this is my subject area” (68A 3-36)</p> <p>“...stand-alone trail blazer” (58C 2-5)</p> <p>“They’re very, very good as researchers, but often they can’t lift themselves out of their discipline and see the bigger picture” (70A 3-6)</p> <p>“Doctors, and particularly consultants, are independent people and they are in their pinnacle of their career. Each one has his own idea, has his own ways of doing things and I think you have to respect that and you need to give them a latitude to work towards that” (57C 3-54).</p>
<u>Intuitive working relationships</u> Two or more specialist members collaborate for shared outcomes, with intuitive understanding developing over time toward a close working relationship	<p>“It [gaining cooperation] is, without doubt, the hardest thing I do every day. Of course, they’re not doing it for me and I genuinely don’t see it like that at all” (36C 3-25).</p>
<u>Institutionalized practices</u> An inclination towards institutionalizing formal structures	<p>“It’s about saying to people look, we are all contributing, but the university is a bigger body</p>



and putting these (committees, teams) together to facilitate collaboration between individuals	than any of us and we've got to work to the overall benefit of our university" (47A 3-13).
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**Table 5.3 Gronn's (2002a) Forms of Practical Engagement**

Further, analysis highlighted people are not always willing to receive leadership and "don't want to be managed" (50C 4-7), with individuals working effectively "as long as you leave them alone" (08A 3-34). This notion is heightened with strong individual opinions and a lack of professional accountability evidenced in low-authority environments:

"I see nobody as my boss. This is where it gets tricky because I don't like being told what to do" (61A 6-18).

The exposure of this issue of receipt of leadership further leads to questioning whether individuals in low-authority settings actually saw themselves as being part of one organization.

"A university is like a mini society - we've got solicitors, we've got accountants and yes, we work for a university, but they've all got their own backgrounds and styles and their own systems" (68A 3-24).

Equally, from Gronn's (2002a) forms of engagement, there appears a complete disregard for the distribution of leadership, as well as a willingness to be led in low-authority. Previous research favours the benefits of engaging in DL and is naïve in assuming that people are willing recipients of leadership. To combat this, a more sophisticated, reciprocal version of DL is required where expectations are that there is follower willingness to take ownership. It has been established that DL has limitations and, as theorized in the extant literature, it does not problematize the assumption of willing participation, and is not designed or sufficiently equipped to work in low-authority settings. In this sense, DL in a low-authority setting needs to be understood as addressing multiple rather than singular organizational settings.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This thesis enriches existing DL literature by taking into consideration thinking of a lack of reciprocity. Further, this thesis provides clarity in how leadership should be distributed within low-authority. When compared to other environments, low-authority professionals have the ability to alter levels of organizational membership and to which organization they choose to subscribe. This greater freedom and autonomy bestowed upon them allows this degree of flexibility. However, in a more command-and-control-

oriented structure, if an individual is told to do something, they do not have these same levels to dismiss instruction and rely on other organizations' affiliations. Due to the highly skilled nature of professionals in low-authority, they are difficult to replace, thus leaders must appeal to alternate organizations in order to gain compliance in their own. Sanction and dismissal are not commonplace as a result of replacement difficulties, so leaders must employ innovative mechanisms in order to lead their peers toward overall shared organizational objectives.

The final chapter is a culmination of everything in this thesis, with the chapter closing with contributions to theory, management practice, limitations and scope for further research.

## **6 Conclusion**

### ***6.1 Introduction***

DL has received extensive attention despite being viewed as a relatively recent addition to the wider leadership literature. Theoretical developments have focused on problematizing the assumptions of what leadership is and attempting to reach a definition, with investigation into whether it is singular or multiple, and reliant upon traits or entrenched. However, despite these significant evolutionary stages, it is not the leadership aspect that has remained under-theorized. It is the processes by which leadership is distributed and, in particular, the challenges encountered when reciprocity in organizational relationships is absent, partial or problematic. The outcome of this thesis marks the culmination of an extensive research project which has provided substantial evidence to highlight the inefficiency of DL within low-authority, professional environments such as those analysed.

In tracking the development of this research DL proved interesting, with investigation wishing to uncover a deeper understanding into what seemed like a heightened sense of leadership capacity in professional roles. This chapter presents the conclusions for the entire research process, beginning with reviewing the aim and objectives of the thesis, followed by an outline of the limitations and suggestions of how to overcome them. Following this, implications for management practice and the influences on low-authority environments are detailed. A reflexive summary closes the thesis.

### ***6.2 Reviewing the Aim and Objectives***

#### **6.2.1 Reviewing the Research Aim**

The principal aim of this research is to undertake an investigation into how leaders exercise influence in low-authority settings, and whether the distribution of leadership can be executed in such contexts when there is the potential for reciprocity to be questioned or ignored within the dualistic relationship that exists between leader and follower. This broad idea is reviewed through the following question:

How is distributed leadership operationalized in low-authority settings?

The research aim was operationalized by research objectives, detailed and expanded upon in the following section.

## 6.2.2 Reviewing the Research Objectives

Table 6.1 presents final reflections on the research objectives and the contributions made by this thesis:

Research Objective	Summary of Research	Contribution Statement	
To explore distributed leadership theory literature and identify theoretical gaps	A dearth in applicability and practicalities of the distribution of leadership in low-authority environments due to membership of multiple, often conflicting organizations. When organizational allegiances are not aligned, peer leadership is nigh impossible and leaders require to find alternate mechanisms through which to exert their leadership influence upon their follower.	1	Extends our understanding of DL by highlighting the influence of the organizational context and suggesting that DL is not a uniform phenomenon, and cannot be ubiquitously applied without tailoring to suit the needs of the particular organization
To make a significant, empirically informed contribution to the practice of distributed leadership in low-authority settings	In completing and analysing 86 qualitative interviews, data informed assumptions have been made, together with theory impregnated conclusions, contributions, management implications and scope for future research. This research could then be utilised in management practice in order to help alleviate the challenges faced by leaders in low-authority settings.	2	Enriches DL theorizing by identifying those who are involved in the distribution of leadership in low-authority environments share their attention amongst multiple organizational memberships that they have
To explore the barriers to reconfiguring the distribution of leadership tasks in low-authority settings	Individuals in low-authority subscribe to more than one organization, posing problems in traditional distribution of leadership. Leaders needs to understand that there will likely be conflicting loyalties when dealing with their followers, and in order to gain cooperation in a disparate team, they will need to employ innovative methods to gain cooperation and collegiality amongst peer colleagues.	3	Analysis extends DL understanding by highlighting the impact of reciprocity, or a lack of reciprocity, and problematizing the relationship between leaders and those that leadership tasks are distributed to

**Table 6.1 Thesis Research Outcomes**

### 6.2.3 Implications for Management Practice

The findings extend our understanding in low-authority, together with suggestions for application in management practice, reinforcing the implementable activities and methods highlighted in research and their relevance in organization. Upon reflection, low-authority, peer-led environments differ from others with increased levels of personal and professional autonomy rendering traditional forms of leadership redundant. There is also an expectation that individuals will display leaderful inclinations: however, this was proved to be a more egalitarian spread. Coupled with this is the propensity for the receipt of leadership to be neglected or opposed, citing new challenges for leaders. In this light, the heroic view of leadership is simply untenable. Low-authority settings align with, and help elaborate, Bennis and Slater's (1968, p.74) conceptualization of an adhocracy, termed as:

“adaptive, problem-solving, temporary systems in diverse specialisms, linked together by coordinating and task-evaluating executive specialists in an organic flux – this is the organization form that will gradually replace bureaucracy as we know it.”

Entry to academic and clinical settings is rigorous and demanding, requiring ongoing competency assessment. Once accepted, professionals within academia and healthcare are specially trained to become accredited in their field. Subsequent promotion is not possible without having achieved further training and undertaking relevant disciplinary experience. It is through this experience and interaction with others that leadership competencies are learned, rather than through formal training processes.

However, in contrast to the above, politicians do not require to pass formal entry into local government and once within the system, there is little to regulate or develop them as individuals or leaders. There are no minimum criteria for an individual to be elected, yet it is often the case that those elected by their communities have areas of expertise commensurate with those of operating a government organization. In a political arena, it is more a person's charisma and popularity that allows them to be elected, rather than formal qualifications. It can be summarized that entry into academia and clinical settings is more regulated and policed than the political environment. This does not reflect the rules that must be adhered to once inside, but merely highlights that there are many different permutations of low-authority environments existing under one nominal banner.

To effect change in low-authority, leaders need to understand peer motivation, as these will likely not be commensurate with the overall aims of the organization in which they

operate. The dual, sometimes triple-layered organizational membership of individuals makes this increasingly challenging. Leaders must be cognizant of these loyalties and understand the often-conflicting motivations of those they are working alongside. Further, as elicited from the data, everyone is an individual, meaning that these driving factors will not be the same for everyone, thus adding to the dynamic, changeable nature of leading in organization.

Combining these individual needs with how settings are regulated highlights the magnitude of the challenges faced by leaders. In academia and clinical settings, peers are highly trained, with the person in charge having likely achieved a greater degree of training to take on such a role. It is this shared commonality and education to which leaders must appeal to gain compliance within the system in which they are leading. Professionals leading professionals can be fractious, as each individual considers themselves as the most qualified in their area which may not mimic that of their leader. In their isolative states, each individual is correct, in that they are the specialist for their area; however, when it comes to perceiving someone else's opinion, they can find it difficult to set aside their often-niche expertise in pursuit of greater good for an organizational objective. For this research, in adding local government as a setting, the findings are still relevant, and all but highlight the applicability in low-authority settings, despite not being inhabited by highly trained professionals like the other settings studied.

Upon reflection of personal experiences of those interviewed, this thesis contributes and enhances DL theory. Getting followers to do things of their own free will transpired as a rather thankless task in some cases and this was immensely frustrating for the leaders involved. This frustration could potentially be two-fold, in that they are trying to operate a collegiate, harmonious department, as well as adhere to instructions and directions that they themselves are receiving from the hierarchical structure governing them. By further highlighting the lack of reciprocity, together with reinforcing that there are in fact conflicting loyalties amongst team members, the findings from this research could alleviate pressure facing leaders in suggesting mechanisms to help increase compliance amongst colleagues. Not only this, but it could also suggest ways in which organizations could alter the methods they promote as appropriate leadership mechanisms to their current and prospective leadership candidates. With some fundamental changes alongside a more appreciative and understanding leadership approach, DL in low-authority could be implemented a whole lot more effectively for the benefit of both the individuals working within and the organization as a whole.

### 6.3 Limitations of the Research

This project explored in greater depths the contexts of academia and healthcare in terms of distributed leadership in an attempt to further understand leadership within these contexts. The as yet under-developed setting of local government was also investigated as a disparate alternative and addition to these highly autonomous environments. As mentioned, both academia and healthcare are policed to gain entry and progress. This is something which is not reflected in a local government setting, with those elected into post by their local community. Whilst theoretical, contextual and management contributions and implications have been summarized above, there are undoubtedly boundaries and scope for future areas of interest to be explored in more detail. The following points detail the limitations of the study, and subsequent suggestions for future research are highlighted to overcome these:

Suggestion	Explanation
Mixed methods	Whilst the chosen methodology supported a series of 86 semi-structured interviews and provided rich, insightful data, a combination of additional approaches could bolster this. All data collection techniques have pitfalls; therefore, by using more than one, this would aim to mitigate these disadvantages. Other methods could have been used; however, this would have gone outwith the terms of reference of one PhD project.
Follower Interviews	The sample could be seen as limited, with an ignorance towards those influenced by leaders. Leadership distribution has only been explored from a leadership perspective, with no attention given to those being led. This may be seen as bias toward more strategic, organizationally-oriented responses.
Interview Length	<p>The chosen semi-structured interview approach also harnesses its own faults and limitations. For this piece of research, the following interview length figures are accurate for those carried out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortest – 8 minutes and 48 seconds</li> <li>• Longest – 1 hour, 23 minutes and 26 seconds</li> <li>• Mean – 28 minutes and 53 seconds</li> </ul> <p>According to Gill et al. (2008), “the length of interviews varies depending on the topic, researcher and participant. However, on average, healthcare interviews last 20-60 minutes” (p.293). Despite being particularly applicable to healthcare interviews, the average interview length falls in between these guidelines.</p>
UK-wide Applicability	The difference in organizational structure between Scotland and the rest of the UK does not permit for a direct comparison to be made of universities, clinical health boards and local government councils. Within the confines of this study, 50% of Scottish Health boards were represented, along with just short of 44% of Scottish Councils.

Table 6.2 Research Limitations

## 6.4 Scope for Further Research

With the aforementioned limitations in mind, Table 6.3 details the potential routes for further research to be carried out:

Suggestion	Explanation
Sample Broadening	Interviews could be carried out with other leaders, for example, focus groups with non-medical leaders within the NHS, administrative leaders in academia and managers of paid staff in local government could be conducted to gain a more holistic view of leadership. Yet, focus groups tend to have their advantages and disadvantages, in that people are perhaps more reluctant to be honest and forthcoming in a group situation than they are on a one-to-one basis.
	Research could be carried out with the followers to gain insight into their perceptions about being peer led. Interviews in this study were carried out with those who took on additional leadership responsibilities on top of their academic, clinical and political roles.
	There is potential for all health boards and councils to be represented in future research. Such research as conducted here could be furthered across UK institutions, with further scope for expanding this worldwide. Contacting individuals in academia, healthcare and local government may be fairly easy thanks to populated websites and social media channels, however, success is another aspect entirely.
	Low authorities were assessed to determine how leadership is distributed. High authority environments may prove an interesting comparison where followers are familiar with adhering to order, control and command. These may include environments where rank plays a more influential role – military, emergency services.
Quantitative Data Collection	As only qualitative collection techniques were used in this research, future quantitative analysis may provide elaboration, reinforcing and providing justification to what has been explored in this study.
Method Extension	Longitudinal methods such as diaries (Radcliffe, 2013) and video diaries (Iedema et al., 2006), may permit looking at the reciprocal relationship from both perspectives, with current data only capturing a single perspective. This research was time-limited, however, a more lengthy project would glean more in-depth results and conclusions.
Mixed Methods	Once again, time was a limiting factor for this research project. However, a more time-rich project could perhaps benefit from a combination of research methods, inclusive of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, as well as delving into archival material and other resources to produce a more data-rich result.
Limit Interview Length	Upon reflection, interviews could have been terminated once a given time stamp was reached, however, this may have resulted in cutting short a respondent narrative or key piece of information. Some interviews were limited in terms of their utility because of their length, both being too short or too long. Being too short could suggest a lack of descriptive answers to questions, whilst being too long could act to mask the fruitful data. By having short questions and a time limit, this problem could be alleviated.

**Table 6.3 Scope for Further Research**



#### 6.4.1 Systems Theory and Autopoiesis

The idea of underlying organizations and their respective interaction with one another recurred throughout this research, resonating somewhat with systems theory. Systems theory is concerned with the study of structure and organization of interrelated components making up complex structures in nature, society and science. Autopoiesis as a subset of systems theory purports systems to be structurally open but organizationally closed, meaning that changes to one system can only be triggered through self-replication in another, rather than transferred. It is said to originate from an argument between mechanistic and organismic models, with Deutsch (1968, p.389) reflecting they:

“...were based substantially on experiences and operations known before 1850. Since then, the experience of almost a century of scientific and technological progress has so far not been utilized for any significant new model for the study of organization and in particular of human thought.”

Von Bertalanffy (1956) took an organic systems view as a series of interacting elements, with research reinforcing that isolating any part, including environments, would lead to inappropriate conclusions. His purpose was (von Bertalanffy, 1968, p.38):

1. General tendency toward integration in natural and social sciences
2. Integration seems to be centered in a general theory of systems
3. Theory may be a means for aiming at exact theory in nonphysical fields of science
4. Developing unifying principles through individual sciences towards complete unity
5. This can lead to integration in scientific education

Autopoiesis has developed from its biological roots, through organization to modern day conceptualizations in which it views organizations as dynamic and organic. Autopoiesis aims at helping act as a triggering mechanism for change in another organization. Thompson's (2007, p101) succinct definition of autopoietic systems reminds that:

“For a system to be autopoietic, (i) the system must have a semipermeable boundary; (ii) the boundary must be produced by a network of reactions that takes place within the boundary; and (iii) the network of reactions must include reactions that regenerate the components of the system.”

Compared to other forms of social and organizational theory, autopoiesis is a concept requiring more detailed discussion and analysis, helping create a more in-depth understanding of relevance and effectiveness in contemporary organization. Research has previously concentrated on *how* leaders coordinate people and resources, with little attention paid to identifiable characteristics signalling the presence of leadership. For potential future research, DL and systems theory could potentially be explored in tandem, with the view to further exploring leadership practice not only the within low-authority environments of this thesis, but the contexts beyond.

## 6.5 *Reflexive Summary*

PhDs are referred to as a journey, and this one is no exception. During the process, I have battled with crippling doubts about my credibility as a researcher, wondering why I had agreed to the endeavour in the first place, and my future career aspirations. That said, however, towards the end and being able to see it finally develop into a piece of research was simply incredible. It has been a long, but worthwhile endeavour to have undertaken.

The word *researcher* has underlying connotations, and MacIntosh et al. (2016) suggest that should project research questions fail to evolve throughout the process, this limits potential learning outcomes. It is essential for a researcher to partly remove themselves from the literature and look back in to highlight flaws and inconsistencies in order to research them further.

During this process, I have learnt how essential it is for the project, and research questions in particular, to remain fluid and changeable. Although research questions act as a starting block (Agee, 2009), its dynamic nature means that research should inform where future investigation takes you. Revisiting, refining and polishing these research questions are pivotal for the overall success of a project, and this is something that I will continue in future endeavours. Reaching a final revision of a research question has been described as an “arduous journey” (Leung and Lapum, 2005, p.3), however, it will be of eventual benefit in producing the most robust, applicable piece of research possible.

Further, this research has remained within the relatively rigid confines of the questions set out in the beginning. However, there are other avenues of theorizing and thesis building that could have been further explored in this thesis, yet these were not commensurate with the overall outcomes. This is not to say that this additional data will not inform and be utilized in future projects; however, in defence of this argument they were deemed as surplus.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Research Overview*

#### **Researching Leadership in Low-authority Settings**

Much of the literature on leadership and management makes the assumption that subordinates will follow instructions and deliver expected outcomes. This assumption tends to hold true in the kinds of military and religious contexts that formed the context for many historic studies of leadership. Indeed, even in large commercial organizational settings, such as those studies by pioneering scholars such as Henry Fayol and Frederick Taylor, compliance was assumed rather than problematised. Yet we know that effective influencing is central to the achievement of desired objectives and outcomes in a wider range of contexts. The proposed research starts with the premise that professionals operating in settings where the degree of autonomy given to individuals is far higher than would be found in the military, religious or large industrial organisations of the early 1900s.

We are engaged in a comparative study and are looking to gather data from senior medical consultants, university deans and local government politicians. The focus of our study has been to examine the process of leadership in contexts where there are high degrees of professional autonomy and relatively little by way of sanction available to those seeking to enforce a particular set of organisational arrangements / outcomes. Senior practitioners from the medical profession, and in particular those carrying additional administrative roles, would provide an ideal extension to our study. We are seeking permission to interview medical professionals on the nature of their organisational setting, their relationship to peers and subordinates and the ways in which organisational change is handled from their perspective. The study would be bound by Heriot-Watt University's ethical research policies and both individual and sectoral anonymity would be conferred on all interviewees.

Our aim is to develop practical managerial advice for those in low-authority settings, based on contemporary empirical evidence. Issues such as culture, appointment processes, peer review and professional affiliations will form part of the analysis. The extant literature on management and leadership currently offers a paucity of advice for individuals in low-authority and at worst, may offer counterproductive advice.

Gordon R.A. Jack	Department of Business Management
Doctoral Researcher	School of Management and Languages

## ***Appendix 2: Research Consent Form***

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded
5. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being video recorded
6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

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Name of Participant

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Date

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Signature

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Name of Researcher

---

Date

---

Signature

GORDON R.A. JACK - DOCTORAL RESEARCHER  
**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY**  
**SUPERVISOR - PROFESSOR ROBERT MACINTOSH**

## ***Appendix 3: Interview Schedule***

### **Background to research**

My research is based around management in low-authority settings, meaning environments where an increased level of autonomy is given to players in that environment. In such settings, there is the propensity for these people to be managed by a colleague who has been given, or taken on, an *administrative* role along with their regular duties. Due to the temporary nature associated with these roles, the study aims to assess whether or not the parties involved can actually be managed, and if so, are they managed differently from other disciplines and sectors.

### **What I am trying to achieve**

The aim of the pilot study is to ensure that questions are designed in order to extrude the most appropriate, relevant and useful information and dialogue possible. The richest forms of data are stories *from the field*, and the questions should aim to initiate story telling in the context of each individual profession. The pilot study acts as a practice, not only to ensure the questions are appropriate, but also to hone and refine interviewing technique and recording methods, together with devising suitable ways of analysing the data collected.

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### **Background**

1. Tell me about your career, how you got into this profession and your time in each role
2. Initially, did you see yourself taking on a managerial role within this profession
  - Outline of remit (is there a role descriptor), responsibilities to and for, metrics of analysis of success / failure
  - Is this a temporary position? For how long and is your position tenable on renewal?
  - In what way has the sector changed in your opinion which affects how you carry out your managerial responsibilities
3. Which role do you prefer - your original or managerial role and why
  - Time spent (unlikely to get a definitive answer) but a rough estimate
  - Did or have you received any management training in preparation for, or to assist you to carry out your administrative role more effectively

### **Sector Specific**

4. How easy is it for you to get your colleagues to do things;
  - Particular or proven persuasion tactics
  - Would you say these differ from other institutions you have worked in
5. What are the difficulties in the management of your (equally qualified) colleagues
  - Same professional background and competencies
  - Going from a medical background to a manager (or perhaps just a manager)
  - Would you suggest that managing in other industries is different to yours and why